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ANNE SHERWOOD:

OR, THE

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS OF ENGLAND.

" Il faut ôter les masques des choses, aussi bien que des personnes !"

MONTAIGNE.

" Per me si va nella città dolente :

Per me si va nell' eterno dolore :

Per me si va tra la perduta gente."—DANTE.

" Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud."—Ps. cxxiii., *Bible Version*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1857.

249. v. 95.

LONDON:
Cavill and Edwards, Printers, Chandos Street,



ANNE SHERWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE fortune of Mr. Maberly being moderate, it precluded his taking that position in London, which his ambition would otherwise have led him to assume. With sundry regretful sighs, he saw himself obliged to forego a lordly mansion, and to turn his longing looks from B—— or E—— Square, lest the contemplation of the impossible should cost him too severe a pang.

A handsome, furnished house in —— Place, one of the dependencies of the happy regions, was selected and hired for Mr. Maberly's family; and therein they were speedily established. Friends and acquaintance called; two or three titled cards were carefully put in the little fancy plateau on

the drawing-room table—of course on the top—and they looked remarkably well.

Annie Sherwood found that several of Geraldine's predictions were verified; not that she was admitted to the drawing-room, but Mrs. Maberly really did show herself good-natured. She gave Annie free permission to go and see her friends (she had so many to see!) when her day's work was over, and frequently desired her to take the six children to see various sights, including the wonders of Madame Tussaud's artistic galleries, and the axe (the very identical axe) in the Tower, which had slain the fair Anne Boleyn, the Spanish collar of torture, and other pleasant things. Now a governess is seldom privileged to see all these nice things; and if so favoured, she ought to feel especially grateful, and behave like the good little girl in Dr. Mavor's spelling-book, whose aunt took her to see Miss Cox's baby-house. But our heroine, being, alas! very imperfect, did not feel as happy and thankful as she ought.

One great pleasure she had which she really did appreciate; she was located in a delightful little study, which happened to contain a select library of works of fiction.

And Annie, who knew as familiar friends Homer and Virgil, Demosthenes and Cicero, had scarcely made the acquaintance of Walter Scott; but no sooner had she obtained a glimpse of the glorious world of his creation, than she threw aside her attempts at authorship in disgust, and gave up nearly all her leisure hours to the study of the Wizard. In the evening Annie often had to resign her pleasant sitting-room, for there is no ceremony in ejecting a governess from her accustomed precincts when they are wanted for other purposes, that is, for more important persons. She never thought of murmuring at this, for she could carry with her such delightful company—the Master of Ravenswood, or the Knight of Snowdon, perhaps. Besides, by a strange accident, her own room was a pleasant one; it had been, and would be again, that of a young girl, who had left many a token of her graceful presence behind her. It seemed to Annie, as she looked round on the drawings with which Miss B——’s taste had adorned the chamber, and the everlasting wreaths which encircled some of them, as though she had something in common with the young girl, and should love her if they met.

But though Mrs. Maberly allowed her governess to go and see Madame Tussaud's wax figures and the instruments of torture, &c., and although she communed with Scott's creations, and Milton and Shakspeare came to sing to her, in her solitude, of Paradise and the realms of Oberon, it must not be supposed that her life was all *couleur de rose*. No; several circumstances conspired against her, poor girl. The comparatively small size of the house occasioned an almost utter annihilation, of even the degree of discipline she had been enabled to establish among her pupils in the old country mansion. The reader will ask why? What had the size of the house to do with it? Everything, kind reader! You have never been a governess!

In the large, old country house, in the remote regions of the school-room, a child with even tolerably strong lungs might (when required to do two sums instead of one, to learn fifteen words of spelling instead of fourteen) go through the fatiguing process of screaming for an hour, without any result but weariness to herself; taking this into consideration (and little men and women have very reflective powers), ten to one but the ill-used child would abstain from a storm

which could not reach mamma's ears, whereas, in the smaller space of a London house, one piercing scream, requiring but a momentary effort, would be quite sufficient to attract the indulgent parent. On these occasions Mrs. Maberly was not in the habit of scolding the governess. No; she only took the injured child out of the room, forgave her lessons, and granted her some special treat, to make up for the supposed injustice inflicted on her.

At last things came to such a pass that the beauty would walk nonchalantly into the school-room in the morning, unwashed and uncombed (having dared a new nurse to touch her), and exclaim, "I am only to do two lessons to-day, Miss Sherwood, and I am to choose which they shall be."

The Maberly hopes had likewise a very particular talent for quarrels and for tormenting each other. Unfortunately, they usually tested their pugnacious powers in the most public place they could find. The Park or the street was often selected as the theatre of a biting or scratching match. In vain, on these occasions, did the poor, disheartened governess endeavour to allay the fierce, though puny strife! Deprived of all autho-

rity by the folly of a weak-minded mother, who mistook pampering for tenderness, certain that no correction would be sanctioned or permitted, Annie's efforts for the improvement of her charges were all destined to meet disappointment.

The end (alas ! a common result in such cases, and there are thousands, tens of thousands of them), the end was, that the governess, instead of correcting her pupils' waywardness, ruined her own temper and became irritable, if not morose. Geraldine grew a great, strong girl with a warm, impulsive heart, and as warm, as impulsive a temper. She kicked her sister in a sudden fit of passion ; the governess ventured to interfere, and Geraldine, resenting that interference, knocked her down with a blow on the chest which would have done honour to a professional pugilist. In an evil hour the governess returned the blow, by giving her dutiful pupil a slap on the shoulder. Poor governess ! poor child ! The governess lost her self-respect, and the child saw one whom she should have been taught to reverence, brought down to her own level. Yet in the heart of that poor governess, there was a deep well of love ready to gush up and overflow, for any

one who would call it forth by one word, one look of sympathy! Perhaps not less love dwelt in the soul of the wayward girl, whose better instincts had been choked and whose evil inclinations had been too surely fostered by a mother's blindness. There was not one bad heart in the Maberly family, positively not one; but they very rarely seemed happy themselves, and certainly never allowed those about them to be so for an hour at a time.

Soon after her arrival in town, Annie had taken an opportunity of seeing Bertha Somerton, whom she found scarcely recognisable, so much had a life of comfort and happiness done to renovate her youth and spirits.

Mrs. Harrington had proved indeed a friend, and while suffering herself from one of the deepest sorrows the human heart can experience, found in the midst of grief some alleviation in caring for others. Her husband was unchanged, and patient endurance was settling down into the calm melancholy of hope resigned. She had never yielded to angry feelings, there were none such in her nature, and she loved her husband still.

Bertha spoke enthusiastically of Mrs.

Harrington, who, not contented with giving her a bare stipend, had, though with the utmost delicacy, pressed on her so many useful gifts, that she had been enabled to devote nearly all her salary to her mother's use. Bertha had also had the happiness of paying her mother a visit—spending six weeks at Merton; the first holiday she had had granted to her, since the commencement of her governess life. Of course Annie and Bertha had a thousand things to ask and tell each other, of their mutual experience since they had parted, yet more of the little doings of Merton, dear old Merton! Annie anxiously asked. She would hear of everybody, from her dear father's right-hand man, the round-faced, fat churchwarden, down to the poor blind, old woman, to whom she and Ellen had been wont to read the Bible.

All the Merton news was satisfactory. The poor had declared that they "liked the new minister well, though he could never be to them what their own Mr. Sherwood had been." [Still they liked him, all but one poor old woman, who had "heard that Mr. Backhouse was a pious minister, but did not see how that could be, for she'd been up to the vicarage to get a letter writ to her son

in Ingy, and she'd seen with her own eyes that he'd got graven images in his house, and the Bible was clear against that!" The graven images in question, were the first busts ever imported to Merton! "Mr. Sherwood never had graven images to bow down to, that he hadn't." The good inhabitants of Merton had asked with eager solicitude after the welfare of their beloved pastor's daughters.

Mr. Turner had made his inquiries with a kind of nervous trepidation, which either showed that he could not name Annie Sherwood without emotion, or else that he was intimidated by the presence of Bertha, she being the only person in Merton who had seen General Tom Thumb or heard Jenny Lind!

"Have you seen Miss Maynard lately?" inquired Annie, when the Merton visit had been fully discussed.

"Oh yes, she often comes to see me," replied Bertha; "Mrs. Harrington has taken quite a fancy to her, and presses her to come frequently. I told you every one liked Hortensia, and thought her clever!"

"Is she still at Sir William S——'s?"

"Still; do go and see her; she will be

delighted with your visit. But do you know, Annie, I begin to fear that she will not stay at the S——'s. I only gather this from hints, however. If she leaves, it will be extremely awkward for her, as it is generally understood that she is more the friend of the family than the governess. I scarcely know what she can do to account for the separation."

Annie Sherwood found with surprise that the happy year which Bertha had spent at Mrs. Harrington's, in teaching sweet children things useful for time and for eternity—in daily communion too with the kindest heart and the most refined mind, had so effectually effaced all painful impressions of her bondage at Mrs. Cheshyre's, that Bertha was ready to smile at her past troubles. She would even aver that things had not been as bad as she had imagined them. "The life of a governess may be made an easy one," said Bertha, "if she is only contented with the allotment of Providence." She even went so far as to smile incredulously when Annie recalled to her several little things she had herself related, exclaiming, "Dear Annie, you must have dreamt that! I never told you so." And certainly Bertha

was honest in her declaration, only present peace had obliterated past suffering.

Mrs. Harrington received Annie with the greatest kindness, and asked her to spend the evening. Mr. Harrington was fortunately absent. Mrs. Harrington inquired after Ellen with great interest, but carefully avoided making any allusion to her late connexion with the Elmgrove family. She well understood the exact state of the case, though it had been very differently represented to her.

Late in the evening a carriage stopped at the door. Mrs. Harrington started; she feared that her husband had arrived; and for some reasons, scarcely self-explained, the unfortunate wife had an instinctive feeling that she would not like him to become better acquainted with Annie Sherwood, who some way could be, and was, more charming, when once engaged in conversation, than a regular beauty. But it was a lady's voice in the hall; and with a mingled feeling of curiosity and pain, Annie heard Miss Sophia Ferrers announced.

"Has anything happened to my sister!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrington, who was quite unprepared for so sudden an arrival.

"Nothing. Indeed she's very well,—as well as you or I, if she'd only throw her novels in the fire and give up the sofa," replied Sophia. "I have run up to town, under the protection of mamma's maid, to do a little shopping—in fact, to buy my trousseau."

"Your trousseau! I did not know that you were engaged, Sophia!"

"Oh yes, I have been engaged two years to my cousin, Francis Vincent (you know Francis Vincent). He has been wonderfully constant, considering the pains that my kind sister Caroline has taken to lure him from me. Of course mamma told you all about that odious Miss Sherwood's affair. After using every vile art to draw Francis to her, at last she got one of her low associates to way-lay and nearly murder him. We knew nothing of it till the fellow had gone to America, or Australia, or somewhere, they say, to shake her off—for Francis most nobly kept it all to himself, and pretended that he had been thrown from his horse. I don't know the least what has become of the wretched, intriguing creature!"

"But I do, Sophia," said Mrs. Harrington, who had made several vain efforts to stop

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the torrent of vindictive misrepresentation; "Ellen Sherwood is living with an estimable and religious family, where her virtuous integrity and conscientiousness are appreciated, as I did hope they would have been in my sister's house. This lady is Miss Sherwood's sister; when I tell you so, I trust you will regret your hasty judgment and its most uncharitable expression."

"My dear Mrs. Harrington, you always were eccentric, and always will be. Pray is it true that you have set up as an assistant to the City Mission? That you go into all the vile holes in London? I hear that, *à la* Shaftesbury, you frequent regular dens! What can you find there?"

"Much sin and misery," answered Mrs. Harrington, slightly colouring.

"And, you think you're right to go into it?"

"I only follow humbly in the footsteps of our Great Exemplar, Sophia," said Mrs. Harrington, gravely.

"Who is that?" asked Sophia. "Do you mean Lord Shaftesbury? Of course his high rank covers all his oddities, but——"

"Unfortunate girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Har-

rington, "in what school have you been taught?"

"In one of my own inventing, I believe. Oh, how glad I am that Francis has no Methodist notions! I declare we have had no peace of our lives ever since Ellen turned religious! There's a precious instance for you! She grows worse and worse; has been everything by turns, and nothing long. Once she was as gay as I, then was suddenly converted, grew strictly evangelical, turned Puseyite, then moderate, and has now gone over to the Wesleyan Methodists."

"But that is no argument against religion, merely a proof that poor Ellen had not enough of what you call Methodism."

Sophia had particular reasons for keeping on good terms with Mrs. Harrington. She found her hospitable house particularly convenient on occasions; besides, she liked flirting with Mr. Harrington. She did not again refer to Ellen Sherwood.

Annie had risen to depart, not only from a natural repugnance to remaining in the company of one who spoke so insultingly of her sister, but also because (though on account of her hostess she endeavoured to restrain her indignation) she feared that

she could not continue silent, should Ellen be again mentioned so disparagingly.

"But you are not going yet!" said Mrs. Harrington, in her kindest tone; adding, with marked emphasis, "it is not often that I am enabled to enjoy such company as yours; you must not so soon deprive me of it."

Sophia raised her eyebrows, so that Annie might observe her action, though she hoped Mrs. Harrington would not. She raised them still more when Mrs. Harrington ordered the carriage to convey Annie home! "No, not home!" thought Annie, but with more of melancholy than bitterness.

When our heroine withdrew, Mrs. Harrington's farewell was so cordial, that it might be called affectionate, and her countenance evinced her sincerity.

"Is she not the most loveable creature in the world?" said Annie to Bertha, who had left the room with her.

"She is an angel!" replied Bertha, warmly. "God bless and reward you for sending me to live with her!"

CHAPTER II.

It happened that Annie Sherwood had, according to the custom of Belgravians, "which altereth not" in such matters, to conduct her pupils to the gardens of the — Square every morning. There the children were wont to play together; and provided they were not very quarrelsome, it was a sort of holiday hour for the tired governesses, who might sit down on the benches, and watch their young charges while they themselves conversed.

The younger children of the Maberly family, who had not gone so thoroughly through the process of spoiling as their sisters, were particularly attached to their governess. The brightest moments in Annie's life were those in which the youngest child, a lovely cherub with bright golden ringlets and blue eyes that danced in light, would stop in the midst of her play, and, rushing towards her, throw her arms fondly round her neck, while her infantine lips whispered,

“Don’t cry, you beauty!” and the tiny hand wiped away a stray tear. “Beauty” was that child’s fondest term of endearment to her,—all she loved was beautiful. Her little heart was a world of love! Annie Sherwood doted on the sweet child, and in after years never recalled the artless tenderness that had soothed so many a sorrowful hour without tears.

Yes, those little wayward, spoilt children had all warm, generous hearts, and Annie could not choose but love them, even the girl that had lifted her hand against her. “It is not their fault,” she would say, when reviewing what they had done in her calmer moods. Then she would think of their mother, and of what was amiable and excellent in her; her open-hearted charity, her deep though mistaken love for her children, her comparative indulgence to herself, giving her liberty to see her friends, not overtasking her strength, &c.; and the result of these cogitations usually was, “Mrs. Maberly has a kind heart, but she is enslaved by the world. I will try to be thankful for the instances in which she is kind, and will resolutely turn my eyes away from the pride that so constantly hurts my feelings. I

will try to be more patient with Geraldine. I have not been as enduring as I ought to be. For dear Antonia's sake I will strive to please her sister." All this looked well in theory; but when the practice of the theory came to be tried—when the violent scenes of strife recurred—when the poor children, unrestrained by any just authority, fought with and injured each other, the strong oppressing and ill-treating the weak!—again and again Annie lost patience. Again and again the foolish mother assured her that all would come right with time.

Annie Sherwood found plenty of food for amusement and speculation, among the numerous governesses she met in the gardens. She found that they usually became acquainted and confidential without the ceremony of an introduction. So would Robinson Crusoe have become with any set of men, had he been favoured with an accidental rencontre now and then in his desert world, with those situated like himself.

A few of the governesses, however, held themselves aloof from the rest, and prevented their pupils joining in the merry games of the general throng of children. The exclusives were principally ladies residing in

noble families, who, from clinging for a year or two to the skirts of nobility, almost dreamt that they might say "people of our rank!" Silly pretenders, you are but upper servants after all! Drop those haughty airs, which become you as little as the lion's skin became the ass—drop them, I say; if your noble masters came by, you know you must!

It was very easy to distinguish the few who were on confidential terms with their employers. Their countenance, their very walk showed it. Proud consciousness of their position shone forth in their eyes. No royal favourite ever more plainly bore the stamp of the dignity he enjoyed.

Among the governesses was one young girl—yes, literally a young girl, for she could not have known more than nineteen years of joy and sorrow; no doubt both had fallen to her share. She was a Swiss; not a beauty, but a fair, gentle creature, whose very look of innocence and trust seemed to claim sympathy and protection.

Annie Sherwood was sitting on the same bench with the young stranger, who was reading while her *élèves* were at play. It is a capital offence in a governess to read

under such circumstances, even if she should look up from every second line to note the safety of her pupils. But the stranger was ignorant of the extent of her delinquency—she did not yet know her craft ; it was not many months since she had left her native valley and her fond mother.

The young governess looked up at her pupils, and her eye caught Annie's, fixed on her with kindly interest. Julie did not hesitate to speak.

"Have you read this?" said she, extending her hand to show the book she held. She spoke in French ; but Annie replied in English that her knowledge of French was too limited to enjoy the beauties of *L'Histoire des Girondins*.

"You don't know well the French?" said Julie. "I am sorry ; but I shall teach you."

"You are very kind," said Annie, "very kind indeed ; but what opportunity shall I have of receiving, or you of giving lessons?"

"Oh, very good occasion ! You come here every morning, don't you?"

"Yes, unless it rains."

"And I come whether it rain or not," said Julie, sighing a little. "Well, then, when it is fine, I shall bring with me a grammar

and a reading-book, and so you shall learn. I live in —— Street, with Lady T——; and you, where do you live?"

"In —— Place," said Annie.

"That's not very far. You will come and see me; I will go and see you."

"But will Lady T—— approve?"

"She will not think about it. I am always alone in the evening. But the lesson shall be here; morning is the best time to study."

"I am very grateful for your offer," said Annie, "but I am afraid you must not do what you propose."

"Why not?"

"Because Lady T—— will think you are neglecting the children while thus engaged."

"But I am not at all absent, and we should be *all* near my *élèves*. I should not cease looking."

"It wont do," said Annie; "it will only get you into trouble; we must not think of it. But perhaps we can arrange for some other plan. I can go to see you some evening. But you have not told me your name."

"Julie."

"But the other, the surname?"

"Angelet; and yours?"

“Sherwood,” said Annie, who thought, of course, that she and her new acquaintance would be Miss Sherwood and Mademoiselle Angelet to each other. Not so thought Julie; she must know her new friend’s Christian name, and call her by it. Moreover, she was ready in all sincerity to vow a life-long friendship to one unknown to her an hour previously. Julie’s simplicity and evident innocence amused and interested Annie. There was something in her—only a look, a very slight look—which reminded her of her dear Ellen; that alone would have formed a bond of union between Annie and the stranger. But after a short acquaintance (which, in leading our heroine to think of her friend’s troubles, diverted her mind from her own cares) she learnt to love Julie for her own sake. She soon found that the poor foreigner’s life was one of hourly torture. Reader! the detail of a day spent by the governess in Lady T——’s family would only produce an incredulous smile on your countenance. You would indignantly exclaim, “This is a vile slander; such people do not exist! such scenes never take place!” The writer of these pages therefore abstains from placing before you a vivid picture of

the miseries which that poor young foreigner bore—bore meekly, far from her native land, from home, affections, and from sympathies,—bore, because she had a mother, a widow and in poverty.

“Why don’t you leave?” exclaimed Annie, one day. The answer was tears from those sweet, innocent eyes, and the words “*Ma mère !*”

Annie Sherwood fulfilled her promise of calling on Julie. She was admitted by a page, who, jerking his finger over his shoulder, pointed to the staircase, curtly answering her inquiries by “Up there !”

“But where? which room?”

“Top of the house ; sure to find it,” said the boy, with a grin ; and he let himself out by the hall door, which he closed after him, leaving Annie standing alone, and embarrassed as to what she should do.

A ponderous dinner-bell sounded. Annie, fearing to meet some of the party from the drawing-room, made a rush up the staircase, and flew, rather than ran, to what she supposed to be the top of the house.

A light glimmered from under a door ; it must be the school-room. “Julie,” said Annie, softly ; more she could not say, for

her breath was gone. No answer; she lifted her hand to knock, but ere she could do so the door suddenly opened, displaying a lady's dressing-room; and a voice of peculiar harshness and asperity exclaimed, "Who are you, and what is your business?"

"I have mistaken this room for the school-room. I came to see Mademoiselle Angelet," replied Annie, with an unmoved countenance and in a firm tone.

"Then you can't see her; she asked leave to go out for the afternoon, so I suppose she is gone. But what is your business?"

"I thought I had told you, madam; to see Mademoiselle Angelet."

"Well, if you wanted to see her, you must have had something to say to her, and you'll just tell me what it was!"

"It was what one friend might say to another, but would not be coerced into detailing to a stranger. I am sorry I have disturbed you. Good evening." And Annie turned away.

"Stop, stop!" cried Lady T——; then called up another flight of stairs, which had before escaped Annie's observation, "Here's a person wandering about the house who *says* she came to see Mademoi-

selle ;” but Annie had succeeded in making her escape.

She was in a very gloomy mood the whole of the following day, and, alas ! tried her new-born powers in French, by thus writing to Julie :—

“ C’est en enfer que vous vivez, chère Julie. Y aller pour vous voir ! impossible ! ”

CHAPTER III.

THOUGH ruffled by the scene she had just passed through at Lady T——'s, Annie soon recovered her equanimity. A few days afterwards she called on a governess acquaintance, whose usually smiling face led her to expect that her life was differently spent to that of the unfortunate Julie.

Mademoiselle Clairvault was giving her pupils their lessons, in the usual kind of half-furnished den at the top of the house, commanding an extensive view of a whole street of mews.

The governess did not at first perceive Annie's entrance. The children were nominally engaged in ciphering; that is to say, they had slates before them with imposing rows of sums on their surface, but one girl was looking over a picture-book, another scratching the table with a pin, a third behind her preceptress's chair mischievously busy in cutting a hole in her lace collar, with a pair of sharp scissors. Mademoiselle her-

self, entirely unconscious of their proceedings, was absorbed in a volume of *Mathilde, ou les Mémoires d'une Jeune Femme*.

Annie advanced, and laid her hand on the shoulder of the reader, who looked up at her with a vivacious smile, and taking in at once the meaning of the grave face bending over her, exclaimed, "I know well *at* what you think ! mais que voulez-vous ! on me trompe, et je trompe à mon tour !" Then drawing her visitor towards the window, she continued, in a lower tone, "Dey tell me dey treat me like de famille. Bon ! I believe dem. But dey treat me like de chien, et je me venge ; I am de renard ! Why not Madame la Comtesse sometime speak me herself ? Why send de impertinent femme de chambre give orders ? I obey de femme-de-chambre ! Non, non, jamais ; mes élèves s'amuse, je m'amuse aussi !"

Annie Sherwood, with all her faults, had a grave sense of duty, and of fulfilling duty for conscience' sake ; even without that principle she would have gone through her tasks with exactitude, for she was too proud to deceive. The philosophy of Mademoiselle Clairvault shocked our heroine ; she attempted to remonstrate with her, but she found her

convictions too stubbornly seated to be moved. Clarisse Clairvault was naturally good-tempered, and even amiable; but, having no fixed principles, would be bent by circumstances. Had she been placed with Mrs. Harrington, all that was kindly in her nature would have been brought forth, and a disgraceful neglect of duty would never have been practised. As it was, the serfdom of the Countess of ——'s family had made her—*what the slave usually is—cunning and deceitful.*

In return for the good advice Annie had given Mademoiselle Clairvault, she was laughed at, and told that she would soon learn to return "measure for measure!" And that unprincipled woman spoke truly. As the system of "governessing" now exists in English families (with some honourable exceptions), the fate of the dependent is to become hardened by oppression or broken-hearted—unless, indeed, high and holy faith has been her guide, preserving her alike from temptation or despair.

Mothers should beware of the evils they create for themselves and for their children by their false estimate of the really important position and office of the governess. Mothers of England! would you ensure a

faithful discharge of duty from her to whom the training of your children is confided, while you are following the idol fashion or the pageant of amusement, degrade her not beneath the level of your menials; show her at least courtesy, if you have no heart for kinder feelings, that your children may profit by the instructions of one, whom you do not teach them by your example to despise.

When Annie returned to Mrs. Maberly's, she found a letter from Ellen awaiting her. Her pupils were absent; their mamma had taken them out to see something. An hour or two of freedom remained to her, during which she might read and reread the lines traced by her dearly-loved sister. But, as Annie read, the blood rushed into her face, and her temples throbbed as though they would burst.

“DEAREST ANNIE,—I am not very well, and fear that my strength is not sufficient for this situation, and yet my duties are light. I should not (even feeling as I do) resign my office, but Mr. —— told me last night that his wife had requested him to speak to me, and say that they did not consider my health and spirits sufficiently good for my position, and therefore wished me to leave.

You must not think from this that they have been unkind to me, for indeed, indeed they have not.

“Mr. —— is a most self-denying Christian, who spends his life and nearly all his fortune in doing good ; he is as near perfection as humanity can be. My dear children (for inexpressibly dear they are to me) are all that I could wish, and it will indeed cost me much to leave them.

“You must not, my dear, kind sister, be uneasy about me ; I think I know exactly what is the matter with me : I am very weak, have a pain in my side and a little cough—remember, not a bad one—and I have become rather nervous. I am afraid I have not prayed as much as I ought for resignation to Heaven’s will ; I mean with regard to poor Richard’s loss, for dead I am sure he is. Perhaps he has been too much in my thoughts ; and the solitude of this house, which no one ever enters, the constant silence that prevails in it (you might hear a pin drop), has preyed on my spirits, I must own.

“Poor Mrs. —— is a great invalid. There is nothing haughty or disagreeable about her, but she has fallen into invalidish habits. No doubt she was very different before her

illness. She is querulous and peevish; one would almost say selfish, if she did not suffer so much. She cannot bear the least sound, and if a book falls accidentally, she sends up-stairs to inquire what the noise is, and to request more care. Sometimes on these occasions she comes up herself, and looks so red and vexed. On this account I live in constant trepidation lest the children should forget to tread softly; and though they are good, dear children, they sometimes forget themselves, and, being carried away with their spirits, skip across the room. The result always is, that I have to listen to a long expostulation, though I am very careful to keep them as quiet as I can. Don't think ill of Mrs. —— for this. I am sure she means to be kind, though circumstances have made her temper trying.

“But, to return to myself. I shall be in London in three weeks. What a kind Providence has led you there before me! I wish very much, till I find another engagement, to be at our old lodgings in N—— Street. I love that house from association. I look so much older than I did, that my living alone will not seem strange. Besides, you will be near me; and before you leave Lon-

don again, I dare say I shall be in another family. How strange that you should meet Sophia Ferrers at Mrs. Harrington's!

"I often think about the Ferrers, and wonder whether my fancy did not exaggerate their faults. Perhaps appearances sometimes deceived them about me; they may now be really sorry for their unkindness. It is so much pleasanter and happier for one's self to think as well of people as we can. I am glad I left them, though; for I fear that if I had remained at Elmgrove, I should have become quite wicked!

"How pleasant to hear of dear old Merton! and how thankful I am for Bertha's happiness! Oh, dear Annie, it seems an age since we met! I feel better already at the mere thought of going to you; to-night I shall not lie awake coughing. God give you the best blessings, my own dear sister!

"Your affectionate ELLEN."

Interpreting Ellen's letter as her fears suggested, Annie trembled with apprehension, and almost expected to find her poor sister in the last stage of consumption on her arrival. The three weeks which Ellen had mentioned seemed interminable.

And yet at the last moment, when they were about to meet, Annie's courage failed her; and as she stood on the platform at the railway-station to receive her sister, after the first eager look at the train as it entered, she covered her face with her hands, fearing to see the change she anticipated. But she had not stood there long, when some one eagerly caught her arm; she uttered one hurried exclamation, and despite the proprieties of public life, clasped Ellen in her arms, pale, faded as a crushed lily, but with eyes of unnatural brightness, which showed consuming fever. "My Ellen! my poor, poor Ellen!" sobbed Annie.

"Don't pity me," said Ellen, faintly smiling; "I am so much better than I have been. But I must go, and claim my luggage." As she spoke, Ellen walked quickly along the platform, drawing Annie with her. Presently she dropped her handkerchief; Annie stooped to pick it up, and, in so doing, observed that it was discoloured with spots of blood. She looked at Ellen with inexpressible anguish. "I am not so ill as you fancy," said Ellen; "you will see, dear, what a few weeks will do for me!"

"A few weeks!" Annie shuddered. "A

few weeks!" she repeated, clasping her hands, and weeping. And no wonder the poor governess wept at the prospect of travelling on life's weary journey alone—quite alone!

Annie led her sister with tender care to the humble dwelling in which they had together passed so many trying months; there, divesting her of her heavy outer garments, she made Ellen lie down on the sofa, while she prepared tea for her. "How strangely this is like the scene of long ago!" said Ellen. "Just so, Annie, the first day we spent in this house you made me lie down, while you took all the fatigue. How you used to spoil me—how you spoil me still! just as if I were a child, though I am sure I do not seem at all younger than you."

Ellen was indeed altered, and looked several years beyond her real age. Her figure was attenuated, and her sweet face, no longer shaded by a shower of golden curls, looked thin and drawn.

"Why don't you curl your hair, darling?" asked Annie.

"I left off wearing curls, you know, dear, to please Mrs. Ferrers, and I supposed they would be equally objected to elsewhere. Besides, I have not cared to curl my hair since

.

——” And poor Ellen’s voice was here broken with sobs, which she vainly struggled to suppress, and in the shelter of her fond sister’s arms she gave free course to her tears.

Then Annie drew from her the truth, that the poor girl’s health and spirits had been shattered at least as much, by the wearing ill-temper of Mrs. ——, as by grief for her lover’s loss.

“And this is religion!” said Annie, bitterly.

“Religion! Oh, no, dear Annie!” said Ellen, in a voice of deep sorrow; “this is corrupt human nature—religion is all gentleness and peace! I wish you could have known poor Richard: he would have taught you true Christianity. How you would have loved him, if you had met! But you will meet some day, for life is short, and we shall spend an eternity of happiness together. Eternity, ‘that day of never-ending peace!’ as Thomas à Kempis calls it.”

Annie made no reply. She could not enter into her sister’s beautiful and inspiring hopes. She was weary of earth and earth’s trials; but a veil was spread between her and heaven—the veil that unsubdued passions hang before the high and holy.

Annie busied herself in preparing for her sister's comfort, till she had induced her to take the refreshment she so much needed.

She then soothed her to sleep, and, slipping out, went in quest of a physician, Dr. Sinclair, who, though in extensive practice, never affected to be busy when he was not, and never kept even a poor patient waiting in order to enhance his own importance. The Doctor was considered very clever, but odd and eccentric.

When Annie returned, accompanied by the Doctor, Ellen was still sleeping, but her dreams were bright and happy, as her countenance showed.

"A sweet young creature!" said the Doctor. He was only speaking for his own information; but he had said enough to convince Annie that he was a very clever man, though what proof he gave of cleverness, in admiring our heroine's sister, we must leave the reader to discover.

The old Doctor sat down patiently to await his patient's waking, and in the meanwhile examined her state as well as he could, and questioned her sister of her occupations and habits. Annie eagerly told him all she knew. There was something in the clever old

Scotchman which immediately won her confidence, so she spoke without any reserve, and the Doctor listened with evident interest, not only to the detail of Ellen's late painful position and trials, but also to the praises of her excellence. It never occurred to Annie to suppose that anything she could say of her sister, would sound ridiculous or exaggerated, so simple was her faith in the fact of Ellen's being the sweetest and most faultless being in creation.

The Doctor listened till quite the end of a very long story, and then fell into a reverie. He was an absent man, and had a habit of expressing his sentiments and opinions pretty freely to himself; but it generally happened that his remarks were made so loudly as to benefit every other person present.

Dr. Sinclair was old, his locks were thin and grey, his face deeply lined with thought, perhaps with cares past, though he was now prosperous in the world.

He sat beside the sick girl's couch, holding her delicate wrist in his hand. "Bad case," he muttered, "very bad;" and Annie stood by, clasping her hands in silent misery.

"Governess again! fourth this week!

Better call me in to an omnibus horse at once, or a needle-woman! Ah! Mr. Hood, your 'Song of the Shirt' was a fine thing—a very fine thing! Pity you hadn't made the song of the grammar and geography! Sweet creature! But she must go, though! she must go!"

"Oh, sir! is there no hope?" gasped Annie.

"Who told you there wasn't?" said the Doctor, roughly. "I didn't! No, no; she shan't die!" Then relapsing into absence, he muttered in the old style, "Ha! that's what Uncle Toby said of the Lieutenant! but he did die, for all that!"

"Oh, sir! what do you say?" exclaimed the half-frantic Annie.

"What did I say? I said you must be careful, and she must do no more governessing; better send her into a coal-pit at once to work. She must go and board in some cheerful family—say a medical man's, who can watch her state, as it varies. It won't cost you much—not above a hundred a year."

"A hundred a year!" repeated Annie, in despair.

"What am I talking about?" cried the

Doctor, with a start of recollection ; “you’ll get it for far less than that. What could you afford to give?”

“Thirty-five pounds a year,” said Annie, dejectedly, naming the whole of her salary, as she boasted no accomplishments ; and for far less than that many a superior woman barter acquirements solid and ornamental.

“Humph !” said the Doctor ; “you say you’re in place. In—in a situation, I mean ?”

“Yes.”

“And I dare say you don’t earn much more than the sum you name ?”

“No more than that ; I cannot teach the things others can. But do you think, sir——”

“Do I think ? No ; I’m sure I can find some one who’ll take you—take her, I mean—for less. I’ll see about it to-morrow. But see, she is waking !”

Ellen opened her innocent eyes with so bright a smile, that she did not look half so ill as before. “Oh, Annie !” she exclaimed, not seeing the Doctor, “I have had such a blessed dream of poor Richard !”

“Humph !” ejaculated the old Doctor ; “Cœur de Lion, I suppose ! Well, perhaps

it's not all grammars and geographies, after all!"

"Ellen, darling," said Annie, very gently, "I have brought some one to see you."

"To see me?"

"Yes, dearest; a kind Doctor, who will prescribe something to make you stronger."

"But I don't want anything, now I am with you, Annie! I am already well."

"Still, to make me happy, you will let the Doctor see what is the matter with you!"

The Doctor then commenced his examination—asked the patient a number of questions, and, as he pursued his inquiries, his countenance brightened up. Not less brightened Annie's; for she had been reading his face, as though to find her sentence of life or death therein. At length he took leave, promising to return on the morrow. Annie tendered him his fee. He pushed it back, saying, "No, no; I like money like rhubarb—in the mass. Send you in a bill some day. Good-night! Get her to bed, and prepare to move to-morrow."

"To-morrow!—to move to-morrow!" said Ellen, in no little astonishment.

"Yes. I've been telling your sister where

you can get much cheaper lodgings," said the Doctor.

"Oh, I am glad!" said Ellen; "my illness will be such an expense!"

"Your illness! I don't mean you to have one!" said the Doctor, with a merry laugh, that almost reassured Annie. "Good-night!" repeated he; adding audibly, "Very nice girls, and one of them very pretty! Governessing, indeed! Better take in washing and ironing! Poor things! poor things! Four governesses this week! Very strange! What nonsense I'm talking! not strange at all! not the least strange! Grammars and geographies and arithmetic books, and nonsensical ologies! I wish Colenso and a few of those fellows were hanged, that I do! Drugs! what's the use of drugs to a drudge? 'Throw physic to the dogs!' The physic she wants is rest and quiet." By this time the Doctor had reached the door, and the rest of his observations were no doubt delivered to the cushions of his brougham.

CHAPTER IV.

THE following day Annie asked for and obtained a half-holiday (on such points Mrs. Maberly was particularly indulgent), and so grateful did she feel for the readiness with which her request was granted, that she was ready to forget everything disagreeable that had occurred in the family.

"How kind in Mrs. Maberly to let you come to me!" said Ellen.

"Oh, yes," responded Annie, warmly, "she has such a kind heart!" The back stairs and other similar matters were entirely forgotten. At three in the afternoon Dr. Sinclair's carriage stopped before the little door of Ellen's lodging, and the Doctor hurried in, very busily talking to himself.

"Well, I've bargained for you with a young practitioner and his wife, Miss Helena," said he, in his rough but kind voice, after finishing the conversation he had been holding with himself. "Not much luggage, eh? Those two trunks and a band-

box? Women must have their head gear. Well, easily managed—very. Big box—Parcels Deliv.; little one go on coach-box; bonnet affair under seat, eh? Nice plan altogether, Miss Sherwood. Only 25*l.* a year; moderate, isn't it? Hammersmith—nice airy place. Ever been at Hammersmith?"

"No, sir, we have never been there," said Annie, who somehow found herself implicitly following the directions of a stranger, without inquiry, and with blind confidence.

"Put on your bonnet, Miss Helena; and you'll come too, of course, Miss Sherwood, to see she's safely lodged, and that I don't burke her. But you don't know anything about burking; it was before your time. Here, Thomas," continued the Doctor, bustling to the door; "got a piece of twine in your pocket?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, give it to me. There, take that bonnet trap, band-box, or whatever it's called, and the little black trunk, and put them up."

"Where, sir?"

"Where, sir! Use your sense! Wherever they'll fit in. Off with you!"

"They'd be rum 'uns that didn't do mas-

ter's bidding," muttered the man. "What a way he has got with him!"

The Doctor then hurried to the table, snatched up a pen, and wrote something on a card, which he tied on the remaining trunk. He handed the sisters into his carriage, and turning back, pointed to the large trunk, saying, "Parcels Deliv." Then he appeared to shake hands with the landlady; she dropt the lowest of all possible low curtsies, and hoped that the Doctor would recommend her lodgings.

"I will, I will," he replied; adding, "when your parlour grows big enough for a pair of lungs to breathe in!"

Neither Annie nor Ellen asked a single question. They felt instinctively that none was needed; and how pleasant it was to have some one to guide and direct them—they were so accustomed to stand alone and uncared-for! And Annie sat quite contentedly, holding her sister's hand; and if there was a little anxiety in her heart, it was more than counterbalanced by hope. When the Doctor asked her bluntly if the people she was with "treated her decently," her answer taking its tone from the favour recently granted to her, she answered, freely—

"Very well; Mrs. Maberly is very kind."

"And liberal?"

"Oh, yes, extremely liberal."

"Not at all haughty or purse-proud, I suppose?"

Here poor Annie's countenance fell, and she made no reply in words. Dr. Sinclair put his head out of the window—

"Slower, Thomas, slower; give us time to see the scenery, and to hear the rich sounds of nature!"

"What! wont you buy twelve iron *skivers* for a penny?" was the first sound that met the ears of the party in the good Doctor's carriage; and the novelty of the strongly-marked and expostulatory tone in which the vendor of skewers cried his wares, so particularly struck the Doctor's fancy, that he called the ragged itinerant to the carriage window.

"There, you clever rogue; a shilling's worth!" cried Dr. Sinclair, "Don't cheat me; twelve twelves are a hundred and forty-four; d'ye hear? There, tell them out quickly; hand them up to the coachman. Pray who taught you that cry?"

"My own invention, sir," said the lad, proudly; "and I make bold to say it's the newest cry about town."

"You like this vagabond sort of life?"

"Well, sir, I've seen many of life's *wicissitoodinous* changes; but taking it all together, I calls all parts pleasant, just as they comes."

"I dare say you do. Hark ye, fellow: call at No. —, — Street, to-morrow, if you'd like another of life's 'wicissitoodinous' changes, but don't steal any forks or spoons; d'ye hear? Drive on, Thomas!" And Thomas drove on, while the skewer-vendor grinned, and repeated yet louder, and more argumentatively than ever, "What! wont you buy twelve iron *skivers* for a penny?"

"I've made a bargain," said the Doctor, turning to Annie. "My housekeeper boasts of her bargains; but I often carry her home something that astonishes her. I wonder what she'll say to 144 skewers for a shilling! enough to last her ten years! London's the place for bargains! Clever rogue, that—very clever. I like his eyes—full of fun and spirit!" and while the Doctor spoke, his own eyes rolled with a merry twinkle. "Some runaway jail-bird, no doubt; but I dare say I shall make something of him, unless he robs me and cuts my throat!"

"Surely, sir, you are not thinking of

taking him into your family!" exclaimed Annie.

"Thinking about it!" said the Doctor. "Dear me, no! I quite made up my mind while I was paying the fellow. I shall get him cheap, and besides, shall have a rich bargain of drollery in him. What a capital Lancelot Gobbo he'd make! Who knows but that in the course of life's *wicissitoodinous* changes he may one day tread the boards. How do you feel now, Miss Helena?" added the Doctor (and when he spoke to Ellen he always softened his voice). "What nonsense to ask! how should she feel but blithe and well, now the grammars and geographies are shut up!"

The drive was long—for Dr. Sinclair had made his man move slowly, that the motion of the carriage might not affect his patient—still it was pleasant. He had an inexhaustible fund of drollery, but so tempered that it kept up his listeners' spirits and attention, without producing violent mirth. At length they arrived at a neat house, standing in small but beautiful grounds, near Hammer-smith. "Humph!" said the Doctor; "this is the sort of thing they call villa. I wonder what the word means? One sees all sorts of

whirligig houses that they call villas. I shall expect to find one of them stuck in the middle of Fleet Street some day. Mr. Ellington at home? Out, is he! Nonsense, don't I know better! Tell him Dr. Sinclair and his friend Miss Sherwood." And without a moment's pause he led the sisters to the drawing-room, and introduced Ellen as the young friend for whom he had been commissioned to negotiate. He then proceeded to give several directions which he wished followed, winding up with "Remember, Ellington's not to drug her; she's my patient, and if she's to be poisoned, I shall keep all the dosing to myself. I think I told you Miss Sherwood would like to spend the rest of the day with her sister. Perhaps you'll be so good as to let my fellow put up what *The Beau's Stratagem* calls my 'leathern conveniency;' it is to wait to bring Miss Sherwood back to town."

"But how can I keep it when you have to return yourself, sir?" asked Annie, anxiously.

"Oh, I shall travel by omnibus; often do; like it best. One hears and sees such droll things in the omnibus. There's always the fat man that takes up the room of three; always the woman with the big bundle

hugged up to her like a baby, and the bigger basket that she sets on her neighbour's toes. There's always the mother with a baby that you are assured is as good as *gould*, but that will squall all the way. Then there's the dandy clerk coming home from his office, or bank, who wears mosaic gold rings and paste, and runs his fingers through his macassared hair to show the said mosaic and paste. Then there's the young lady opposite to him, with seven flounces that will get rumpled, and the bonnet that wont keep on. There's the impatient gentleman, that swears at the conductor, because he stops to take up anybody but himself. There's the child that's thrust in like a foundling, and stands up right in the middle (till the fat woman that's nursing the bundle, makes room for him on the other knee), and stares round bewildered, and wonders if he is really a boy, or a parcel, or a hamper, that he's shipped off that way, by an undutiful aunt! There's no end to the fun in an omnibus; and in my opinion, there's not a word in the English language to be compared to fun. It's the prince of words—should be written in capitals! printed in gold! I know your husband's at home, though your lying fellow pretended

he wasn't; but no matter, for I can't stop. Good-bye, Miss Helena, good-bye. Mrs. Ellington, how many iron skewers do you think I bought for a shilling to-day?"

"I really don't know, Doctor."

"144! Don't I know how to make a bargain? And the fellow I bought them from, had the drollest cry in the world. Good-bye, Miss Sherwood." And giving his last word and look to Annie, he hurried away.

"The most excellent man in the world!" said Mrs. Ellington.

"He seems so, indeed," said Annie.

"Have you known him long?" asked Mrs. E——.

"Long!" repeated Annie; "I saw Dr. Sinclair for the first time yesterday!"

"Is it possible? But what an extraordinary interest he takes in you! Yet I need not be surprised, for this is his way. But come, Miss Sherwood, I will show you your room. The Doctor says that you are to lie on the sofa, read entertaining books, and be regularly supplied with *Punch*!" Mr. Ellington is in his consulting room; he will come and see you presently when you are rested. He is not to prescribe for you at all, you know, but to forward a frequent statement

of your case to the Doctor, who says he shall come over often. He tells me we are to expect the pleasure of your company for a year."

"A year!" repeated Ellen, as she looked round with startled wonder at the elegant dressing-room into which Mrs. Ellington led her, and marvelled what the Doctor's promise of cheapness meant. "I am afraid this home will be beyond our—— means," she would have said, but that her voice was choked by nervous tears. Annie, too, looked grave and disquieted; and Mrs. Ellington, who was an amiable woman, hastened to relieve her uneasiness, the nature of which she well understood. "I hope your sister will be happy and comfortable with us," she said. "Dr. Sinclair spoke of you as very particular friends (I ought to have remembered that, though his friendships are enduring, they often spring up in a day), and as such, begged us to name the lowest terms we could receive. I hope what we have asked is not beyond what you intended giving."

"I think—I fear," said Ellen, hesitatingly, "that we misunderstood Dr. Sinclair. The sum he mentioned seems quite out of the question."

"If it frightens you," said Mrs. Ellington, "we can, I dare say, make a trifling abatement."

"Abatement!" said Annie; "we should be mad to expect it. I was going to say I would willingly add 15% more, only that would still be too little!" she added, dejectedly. "I am afraid what the Doctor said was quite a mistake!"

"What sum did he name?" asked Mrs. Ellington.

"Really, I feel ashamed to tell you, it seems so ridiculously small. I thought Dr. Sinclair was leading us to some humble dwelling, where the most we could expect would be pure air and cleanliness! He said Ellen could be boarded for 25% a-year."

"That was the sum we agreed to receive from you."

"Impossible!"

"Yet it is quite true," replied Mrs. Ellington. "We could not take one inmate on such terms; but we have several, so that we can manage better. We shall be perfectly satisfied." Mrs. Ellington did not add that Dr. Sinclair had promised to make up the deficiency; that they were to receive 125% from the benevolent old man, in addi-

tion to Annie's 25% ! And for once in her life Annie was taken in—as thoroughly taken in as simple-minded, innocent Ellen—and though all still seemed a wonder to her, as she looked round the room, with its luxurious couches, its soft carpets, its air of cheerful comfort, she suspected nothing of the charitable deception practised on her. Still, she was as full of gratitude to the kind Doctor as if she had known the extent of her obligation.

After a number of minute cares for her dear Ellen—such as putting away the loose articles she had brought with her, unpacking her boxes, arranging her few books, her desk and work-box, &c.—Annie returned to town with a lighter heart than she had felt for a long time, and much more faith in human nature.

She arrived late, but there was no one to question her ; so passing hastily up the stairs, she threw off her bonnet and shawl, and went to look at the sleeping children. She seemed to love all so much better to-night, and she stooped and kissed them fondly, even the rebel Geraldine. “ Her day had been so happy ! ” she mentally repeated ; “ so very happy ! and, but for Mrs. Maberly's

kindness in sparing her, she might have lost half its pleasure!" Yes, Annie's heart was full of love and thankfulness. That night a little thing called forth her gratitude; and to crown her contentment, on her table lay a letter from Antonia—the angel that appeared to Abou Ben Adhem was not more welcome.

CHAPTER V.

ANTONIA's letter was a pleasant one—pleasant her letters always were; she was so affectionate, so unworldly. She informed Annie that she hoped to see her in a very short time, as her sister Mrs. Maberly had given her a very kind invitation to spend some weeks in town. "Ah!" thought Annie, "can sisters wait for the ceremony of kind invitations to see each other? Is this what people of the world call affection? But Antonia is not of the world; oh, no! she is not, or I should never love her as I do, next best to my darling Ellen. Nor Mrs. Maberly is not worldly—surely not; after all her kindness in letting me see Ellen, I must not think harshly of her. I will try hard to be more patient with those dear, spoiled children; I will try very hard indeed. While I can keep this situation, Ellen can live in that delightful home, and slave no more; that is such a happy thought! Keep it! yes, if it were like poor Julie's, I would

try to keep it for dear Ellen's sake. I ought to be thankful, instead of murmuring, and I will strive to be more and more so. True, Geraldine did knock me down, but it was in a moment of excited passion. I dare say she was sorry for it afterwards. I shall certainly try to stay! And Antonia too, dear Antonia; she would not like me to leave her sister; our correspondence might be interrupted if I left! No, no; I am wrong! Antonia is too true-hearted to give me up, whatever happened!" Thus mentally soliloquizing, Annie spent two or three hours, during which she was too much excited, and too happy to sleep. Ah, it is seldom a governess is too happy to sleep! very seldom! Certainly there appeared a bright day dawning on Annie Sherwood's life; whether its sun would go down in darkness she knew not, but she resigned herself to sleep and pleasant dreams. Yes, her dreams were pleasant! There came back to her the sweet vision she had had long ago. She saw her sister the happy wife of a man who was leading her gently onward through a peaceful, pleasant path, to the high and holy in eternity. And, as Annie Sherwood slumbered and dreamt in the calm moon-

light, her face became beautiful with the radiance of hope and happiness. She arose in the morning with renovated life, full of faith and trust in heaven and man. She thought that she had passed a turning point in her life; that henceforth her way was to be plain and straight. There might be thorns in her path; but she would tread so as to avoid them, or she would blunt their sting. All would be peace and contentment.

In the course of the day several little things occurred to ruffle Annie; she resolutely refused to see them. Time went by—some days, then some weeks—her grievances increased; she tried to turn her head away, but they crept on—surrounded her as an atmosphere—stared her in the face. Her patience failed; the worn, wearied body and mind feebly strove to bear up against the irritation of the spirit. It was in vain. Old scenes recurred. Poor Annie almost ceased to struggle. Her proud spirit was trampled on. She was insulted; she saw herself fast merging into the menial. Often she compressed her white lips to keep in the expression of indignation tumultuously rising from within; for she remembered Ellen—remembered that the money she earned was

necessary to Ellen's very life. Had she stood alone in the world, she would have rushed forth, and have braved the pitiless storm in the streets, rather than have remained beneath the shelter of the proud rich man's roof.

Annie thought of Ellen, and paused; she thought of something else too,—that to supply Ellen's wants she had humiliated herself to ask and receive some of her money in advance. She had moreover added to that necessary evil by too generously obtaining a second advance, to lend a mere acquaintance, who had no claim on her but real or pretended distress.

Mrs. Maberly did not feel the inconvenience of advancing a (to her) small sum of money, and she was naturally liberal; but she could, and did let the poor governess who had incurred the obligation feel its pressure most heavily.

When matters were about at their worst—at that particular point which is usually considered a turning one, and the precursor of improvement—Annie heard that Antonia would arrive in a few, a very few days. Her letters had been fewer between, shorter, and colder lately. Annie had been hurt thereby,

but it now seemed all accounted for. Antonia had been busy making preparations for town; but when she came—when their old, delightful intimacy was renewed, they could talk freely in their walks, and in the evenings, many of which Antonia would certainly spend with her, as she had done in the country.

Annie was very much like a sentimental girl expecting her lover's visit after a long absence; she not only counted the days, but even the hours, till the arrival of Antonia. How she listened for wheels!—then sighed with disappointment, remembering how foolish it was to expect, among the number of carriages that rolled through the street in a day, to be able to recognise that which would bring her beloved friend. Truly, Annie Sherwood's friendship had all the warmth of love, unalloyed by love's selfishness.

Annie was standing just within the door of her room, her eyes glistening, and her whole countenance irradiated with pleasure. She heard Antonia's voice in the hall; she would have known it among a thousand—it seemed so long though since she had heard it before! What a pleasant voice it was too! so frank! so full of heart! A little too loud,

perhaps, for the fashionable world—still not unmusical.

Annie wanted to rush out and throw her arms round Antonia, but she well knew that there would be some sneering at a sentimental scene with the governess; so she put a great restraint on herself, and waited—she knew so well that Antonia's warm heart would lead her to her friend the moment she had seen her relatives, who might justly claim the first greeting.

Annie stood waiting near the door half an hour; she heard Antonia walk up-stairs, accompanied by her sister. Of course, Antonia could not immediately break off her conversation with Mrs. Maberly, but she would come soon. Annie felt a little sad to think that she might not without incurring ridicule, perhaps even reproof, go forth and greet her friend as her heart dictated; but then she was sure that the affectionate girl felt just as she did. She waited still; the children did not come for their lessons at all that afternoon; lately they had acquired the habit of taking a holiday whenever they chose. At tea-time they began to straggle in; it was an unknown thing for the Maberly family to sit down at one time to a

meal. The children said, "Aunt Antonia is dressing for dinner."

"I have no wish to hear what Aunt Antonia is doing," said Annie, crossly. The children looked at each other and laughed; it was "fun" to see the governess lose her temper sometimes—"real fun," when she was always telling them not to be cross. Geraldine (a quick, clever girl was Geraldine) made a knowing speech about "precept and example." The governess replied sharply, and the consequence was, what the sailors call a "breeze." "It is such prime fun to put the governess in a rage;" and "Miss Sherwood looked so delightfully ugly when she cried." "If Uncle Hal would but come in!" But tea passed over despite the little scene; rather a common occurrence was such an episode. No Antonia appeared. The children rushed off like so many hounds after scent. The first dinner-bell rang. Geraldine put her head round the door of the school-room, looking very merry. "I dare say she'll come and see you by-and-by, Miss Sherwood!"

Geraldine meant to be kind; she forgot the late misunderstanding—forgot that not long before she had knocked her governess down, for venturing to interfere

when she kicked her sister ; and now Geraldine thought Annie was disappointed, and that she would say something to comfort her, for she was beginning to get a glimmering notion of what "people's feelings" meant.

But Annie being so much more accustomed to rude remarks than pleasant ones, thought she was mocked, and as Geraldine still lingered, instead of thanking her she made some hasty answer. "How do you do, Miss Sherwood?" said Antonia, entering, and offering her hand. "I must hasten, for the second dinner-bell is ringing."

Annie held the hand extended to her, and looked up at her friend hastily ; but her trembling lips could not frame a word, and Antonia's hand dropped from hers. Miss Oakley turned and left the room.

"And it is thus Antonia greets me!" repeated Annie. "It is almost as if Ellen herself had forsaken me! Is this Antonia—Antonia that I have loved so much? Romantic fool! what right had I to expect stability from an unequal friendship? Why did I not remember that Antonia was an independent lady, and I the poor dependent governess, cut off from the sympathies of all, unless I choose to accept those of the vulgar

herd?" A drop of gall was infused in Annie's heart that day, which nothing ever expelled again. Yet her judgment of her friend might have been severe—probably it was so. Very likely Antonia still loved her, but she was ashamed to show her affection. She had learnt that the companion of the country could not always, and with equal propriety, be the companion of town life. She had learnt that she would be laughed at, if supposed to be on familiar terms with her sister's governess; and few people are so nobly independent as to bear derision. So, though it was perhaps rather painful at first, it was best to begin as her position, not her inclination, would oblige her to continue. No doubt she was sorry, for Antonia was too tender-hearted to inflict a pang on a human being without sharing in it herself. But one must yield to the world's opinions, and she would try "to make it up to Minnie some other way."

The evening of Antonia's arrival was a gloomy one to Annie. She wanted courage even to think, and as she could do nothing else worth doing, she began to scribble, and produced the best sketch of a tale she had ever before attempted. She was pleased and

surprised at her own performance. Perhaps it was the secret consciousness of her own talents which kept Annie from utter despondency; pride too came to her assistance.

"I will weep no more," she murmured; "henceforth I will only live for my dear, unselfish sister. If Heaven takes her from me, we shall die together. I have no other tie in life—none other will I seek."

Late that night, as Annie lay on her sleepless bed, some one gently opened her door, entered the room, and stood beside her.

"Minnie! dear Minnie! are you awake?" said the old loving voice.

"Awake?" repeated Annie.

"Yes, I want to say something to you. You must have thought me strange to-day!"

"Not at all, Miss Oakley."

"Oh, pray, don't speak to me in that distant way!"

"What shall I call you, then?"

"Antonia, as you used to do in the old pleasant times; then I shall believe you unchanged."

"You wish me to call you Antonia! well, I will."

"But I mean," began Antonia in a hesitating voice; "I mean when——"

"When in private?" suggested Annie.

"Yes, yes, exactly so, Minnie; but how strangely you talk to me!"

"Do I?"

"Yes," replied Antonia, melting into tears, and stealing her arms round Annie's neck. "You make me very unhappy, Minnie, and this is a foolish world."

Annie returned Antonia's caress, and gently kissed her cheek. She understood her now. Her friend had not forgotten their past happy intercourse; her friendship was neither dead nor cold; she only wished it to seem so to the world, because she had not courage to meet the world's opinion.

Annie was no longer angry; she pitied the weakness of Antonia's mind, and forgave her; but she could never again share with her her inmost thoughts.

It was a cold night, intensely cold, but Antonia seemed quite insensible of it; she threw herself down beside Annie, and clasping her in her arms, renewed all her old professions of affection and friendship. But the old story did not sound now as once it had sounded, and Antonia did not feel sure in her heart that she would be believed, though every word was sincerely meant.

Certainly she then fully intended to be the affectionate friend of the poor solitary governess, whom she still pitied, still loved; only her friendship must be shown in private—indeed, be kept as secret as a clandestine love affair. For a long time the friends conversed, but not as in other days. How could they talk as they had done? Confidence no longer existed between them; it was destroyed by the mean cowardice of one.

“You must not stay in the cold, Antonia,” said Annie, trying to warm her friend’s hands between her own.

“But I have so much to say, dear Minnie!”

“Never mind; say it to-morrow. We shall have plenty of time. You will go out with us?”

“Well, dear, I’m afraid I can’t. I shall be obliged to go with my sister.”

“Of course she has the first claim on you,” said Annie. “I ought to have thought of that. But you’ll come into the school-room some time in the evening, I dare say?”

“If I can manage it any way,” said Antonia, hesitatingly.

“You can bring your work with you, you

know," said Annie, "if you have any pet crochet, or other——"

"Not exactly that," said Antonia. "But, Minnie——"

"I suppose we are to have stolen interviews, like clandestine lovers!" said Annie, rather sharply.

"Dear me, what odd things you say!" said Antonia, not liking to make any direct answer.

Annie said nothing in reply. She listened patiently to Antonia's sayings, and offered no comment on them. At length Antonia retired to her own room, after again affectionately embracing her friend. Annie loved Antonia too much to feel any resentment towards her, but she felt as if a star (and a very bright one) had been put out in her sky, and as if she could never trust nor love again.

CHAPTER VI.

HER dream of romantic friendship thus rudely dispersed, Annie Sherwood clung more than ever to her sister. In Ellen she could meet with no disappointment; from Ellen the world could never separate her.

Under the care of the Ellingtons, and the constant supervision of the benevolent Dr. Sinclair, Ellen was rapidly improving; and if a little shade of sadness now and then clouded her fair face, it arose from the remembrance of her lover's uncertain fate, and the contemplation of Annie's toils and lonely existence. As soon as she found her strength returning, she was anxious to seek employment; but the bare possibility of her sister's going back to governess life, made Annie so wretched, that Ellen was obliged to put off the evil day. It might have been observed, that whenever Annie had been to spend a few hours with Ellen, she returned more patient and more humble. Not only did she meekly bear her every-day school-room

trials after those visits, but she met with silent endurance the increasing slights and annoyances received from the family in general; and that which was a thousand times more painful, the growing estrangement of Antonia. Yes, Annie bore much, from the dread of losing the means of supporting her sister in ease and comfort; but, unfortunately, she did not see Ellen very often, to renew the impression in her mind of how much depended on her self-denial; and when that strong incentive to forbearance was momentarily dormant, she yielded to the feelings of indignation and resentment which her unfortunate position inspired.

And daily the situation of the hapless governess became more unbearable, nor had she any one to whom she could confide her sorrows. To Ellen it was impossible to unburden her overcharged mind; she loved her too much to relieve herself by imparting to her the load she was called upon to bear. Should she talk to Antonia? Antonia, whom she had loved so much, next best to Ellen! Antonia was now almost a stranger to her.

There are some things supposed to be immortal, or at least, expected to be such.

Foremost among these things stands the patience of the tutor and the governess. Not only must they barter for a small stipend—sometimes a mere nominal remuneration—"the small accomplishments of a Crichton," the wisdom of a Socrates, and the elegance of a Sevigné; but they must super-add thereto the patience of an Isaac Newton. And, alas! poor Annie Sherwood had not lately been in a school for the cultivation of patience; and one day, being irritated rather beyond even a governess's powers of endurance, she actually wrote a note to give warning to Mrs. Maberly!

But the governess was, after all, but a poor, weak woman, and had overmuch of woman's heart; and while she was sealing her note, her eye accidentally fell on some toys scattered about the floor; and some way those little bits of wood and tin spoke to her of a golden-headed child, that was wont to twine her soft arms round her neck, and with words of endearment strive to soothe her in sadness. And the thought of relinquishing the world of love in that child's heart made Annie pause, and finally made her throw the letter in the fire. It would be re-written when the first kick, or what

she felt much more, the first sneer, should inspire her with fresh determination for the task.

Yes, the letter was burnt, and the governess crept softly into the nursery to kiss the little sleeper, whose love more effectually bound on her galling chains, than her own poverty. Not many days later, however, the warning was again written, and given into Mrs. Maberly's own aristocratic hands, with fearful temerity. *Her* governess want to leave her! *her* governess give her warning! The thing was incredible! *Her* governess, who had been allowed so many privileges! who had even, on two or three occasions, had her salary most liberally advanced to her! It could not be! Mrs. Maberly's surprise was only equalled by her indignation; for if she did not express this opinion in as many words, she certainly thought that to "serve her" in any capacity was such an honour and happiness, that no person in their senses could renounce a post in her family, without the utmost ingratitude and folly.

Mrs. Maberly had but six weeks before her in which to express her anger and indignation; she made an excellent use of the time, and the contumacious governess re-

ceived such daily punishment for all offences, past, present, and to come, that her existence became so miserable as to create a doubt whether purgatorial purgation were really so fabulous as Luther, Calvin, Zwingle, Melancthon, Knox, and a host of other worthies opined it to be.

Mrs. Maberly, despite the habitual hauteur engendered by her aristocratic pretensions, had usually shown an easy temper; and Annie's surprise, when she heard and saw the aristocratic lady fume and rage, equalled the aristocratic lady's surprise at finding that her governess was not afraid of her.

Poor Annie! how she wished the last day had come; the last day of her sojourn under that inhospitable roof! How pleasant would be the round, red face of the cabman who would come to take her away from the Maberlys! To take her away! but to where? to what? To penury—want—starvation, perchance! Where was the home open to receive her? Where were the friends who would supply her necessities? Who would not blame her for giving up a comfortable home, shelter, and provision? And giving up all this from a mere fantastic delicacy; a morbid sensibility which would

not allow her to become reconciled to an occasional slight, or even an occasional kick!

Indeed, when Annie came to think it over, she began to doubt whether she had not been very foolish. Many governesses were so much worse situated than she had been, yet they bore it; why could not she? She might find an exchange of employers anything but an improvement; perhaps she would not get another engagement at all! And then, poor, dear Ellen! What was to become of Ellen? Annie taxed herself with selfishness, and felt almost persuaded, for Ellen's sake, to humiliate herself for ever in her own eyes, by seeking to conciliate Mrs. Maberly, and revoking her warning. Day after day she pondered the possibility of undoing what she had done; but day after day it became a more difficult task. Meanwhile, the apparent insensibility of Antonia cut her to the heart; but probably Annie misjudged her former friend, who was afraid of her sister, and only weak, not heartless.

The day approached for Annie's departure. She wrote to Ellen, "I have ruined you and myself!" Ellen replied, "Your letter, dear Annie, has taken a load off my heart! I thank God for the determination you have

taken, again and again. You have always been wretched with those proud, unkind people, who could neither enter into your feelings, nor appreciate your talents; but how have you kept your miseries to yourself till now?

“Never mind, my own dear Annie, what they say or do to you, you will soon be out of their power. Forget that heartless Antonia, and see if your sister’s love cannot make amends to you for the loss of such a hollow friendship. Be comforted, my sister, there are bright days in store for us yet.

“Oh, Annie, I have such good news to tell you—such blessed news! To-morrow, then, you will leave your hard bondage. Come straight here; you are expected. The dear old Doctor will be with us in the evening, or perhaps, as early as you; and we shall talk merrily over ‘life’s *wicissitudinous* changes.’ You have no idea how well ‘What! - wont - you - buy - twelve - iron-skivers-for-a-penny?’ looks in livery!

“Your loving ELLEN.”

CHAPTER VII.

ANNIE left the Maberlys' door without one word of farewell, or even an expression or look of sympathy or kindness from Antonia; and the remembrance of her friend's insensibility haunted her through life.

To be deceived in friendship is worse than to be deceived in love. Love wears wings, and they indicate the possibility of flight; but sober friendship has no such attributes, and we naturally expect from it a more enduring existence.

To leave even the wayward among her flock was a sore trial to Annie Sherwood; but as she went forth from the inhospitable mansion, she resolutely turned away her face, lest her tears should be seen and derided. When once the coach-door was shut on her, and the window drawn up, she gave way to her feelings, and drawing forth a little golden curl, severed from the head of her little comforter (while she had watched

over her in the weary hours of a painful illness), she kissed it again and again.

But on, on must those go, who toil for their daily existence. They have no time for tears and regrets; no room for sentimental sorrows. On! on! what have they to do with the heart and the heart's affections? Annie well knew all this, so she dried her tears, resolutely dismissed the images of those she had left behind her, the memory of the love she had lost, the insults she had escaped, and set to work to plan the ensuing campaign in search of a fresh engagement. The thought of what lay before her was heart-sickening, but it must be looked resolutely in the face, and so would she look at it.

When Annie arrived at the Ellingtons', she was shown into a small drawing-room in which Ellen was seated, but in such a position that she could not see her sister enter. A gentleman was sitting beside her; and Annie saw, or fancied she saw, that Ellen's hand rested in his, and that very lovingly.

Annie advanced, silent from astonishment; she had seen him so casually, that she could not immediately recognise Richard Stancliff—but he it was.

"Annie! dear Annie!" exclaimed Ellen, starting up, and hugging rather than embracing Annie, in the exuberance of her joy. "Richard, this is Annie!" on which Mr. Stancliff advanced eagerly, and taking both Annie's hands in his, kissed her pale cheek just as if he had been her brother all her life.

And Annie laughed and cried alternately, and asked a great many foolish, incoherent questions, which nobody thought of answering; or if they did answer, she did not listen; and for some hours she remained without the slightest conception of how the happy meeting of the lovers had been brought about, or why she had broken Mrs. Ellington's beautiful china vase, and had laughed at the mischief she had done.

In the midst of a very confused, unedifying, but, to the parties concerned, happy conversation (if conversation it could be called, in which all engaged talked at the same time), in came the Doctor, rubbing his hands, and with a bright light playing over his face that would settle down nowhere, but was now lurking round his mouth, now glancing into one eye, then into the other, like a real Jack-o'-lantern.

"Well, Miss Sherwood, what do you say to my patient? mine, quotha! I suppose this young man means to tell me a different story, as he has stepped into my shoes. But I shall always consider the cure 'mine, and mine only,' as the song says. Glad to hear you've got rid of that cantankerous old woman!"

"Who do you mean, Doctor?" asked Annie, wishing to divert the old man's attention from the blushing Ellen, and the scarcely less discountenanced lover.

"Why, the old woman who has been leading you a life which has made you look as thin as a certain apothecary, who they say lived in Mantua in olden times. You needn't deny it, for I know the life you governesses all lead in Belgravia. Back attic, no ventilation, or wind enough to set a mill going; three miles of stairs a-day; seven of walking out in all weathers; thirteen hours of teaching and talking; hurried, nasty meals; eternal legs of mutton and rice pudding; impudent servants; damp, unaired clothes; kicking, scratching, screaming children; and a shrew of a mother! Oh, don't I know all about it!"

"But Mrs. Maberly is not an old woman,

Doctor, and never sent us out in the rain at all, unless the children particularly wished it."

"And then you had to drag them through the mud to that filthy abomination, the Serpentine! Seventy-nine distinct bad smells in it. Coleridge only found seventy-two in Cologne. Never talk to me about it! If I'd a daughter, your Belgravians might get her as an upper housemaid, perhaps; but as a governess, never, never, if they'd give me a king's ransom for her!"

Here the good Doctor lapsed into his absent habit, and the remainder of his speech consisted of a soliloquy, only parts of which reached his companions. "Broken vase, eh! must be paid for, I suppose. Madame Ellington makes a fuss about her knick-knacks. Now, if it were only a child, with a broken arm, might be repaired, and no costs! Why will women have such kick-shaws about? Fine young man that Stan-cliff! Pity he's not in my trade; make a good lop-lolly-boy, and afterwards slip into my practice. What an old fool I am! No business of mine, certainly. Always worrying my brain about other people's concerns. Poor thing! she looks as if she'd been ill-used! Should like to strengthen her and

help her to beat that termagant! Jealous of her, no doubt!"

"Not the least jealous of me, I assure you, Doctor," said Annie, touching the old man's sleeve; "I hope I am not flattering myself though, in supposing that I am the object of your thoughts."

"The object of my thoughts, you impudent baggage! I was thinking of a plan for cleaning the pestilential Thames, as the C—— of S—— can't do it, with the help of all his mud-larks."

"But why can't he do it?"

"For the best of all reasons, his hands are tied behind his back, and he can't use them."

"And what do you propose?"

"A plan beyond the reach of any comprehension less enlarged than my own."

"Then there can be no use in propounding it, Doctor, as no one will be equal to its execution."

"True; so, like most theorists, I must live on the sublimity of my own conceptions. Remember, I take you in hand to-morrow."

"There is nothing the matter with me, Doctor."

"Nothing! Dear me! Of course not, or a mere trifle. Only you're just a fit ob-

ject for an anatomical museum, showing a gentle descent to the Avernus of phthisis! Didn't I see you in the Park the other day?"

"Perhaps so," said Annie, colouring a little, for she greatly disliked saying that it was indeed she who had been seen struggling with a refractory child, who was scratching her own wrist, that on her return home she might show the mark, triumphantly exclaiming to her credulous mother, "See what she has done to me!"

"Perhaps so!" repeated the Doctor. "Nonsense! don't I know it was you! I suppose you wouldn't speak for fear those angelic children should carry a tale home, and say I was your beau, eh? Ah, you needn't laugh,—you might have a much worse one."

"Certainly I might," said Annie.

"Suppose now, Annie Sherwood, I were to make you an offer, what should you say?"

"That you were not consulting your own dignity, sir, or——"

"Or your taste! Well, I believe you are right, girl. May and December don't go well together. December 'd get rheumatic, tricking himself out in May flowers,

and May would shiver in the atmosphere of ungenial snows."

"Ah, there is nothing like May in me," sighed Annie, as she turned away.

"Little enough, God knows, poor thing!" muttered the Doctor; "when once a girl has settled down to the drudgery of grammars and geographies, she has bid a long farewell to youth!"

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Annie at length found herself quite alone with Ellen, the eager questioning, with its incoherent replies, was renewed. The same things had been asked again and again, and so badly answered, because so badly understood, that Annie seemed almost as far as ever from comprehending all she most desired to know, and would doubtless have long remained in ignorance, had not Ellen hit on the bright expedient of "beginning at the beginning," and recounting the few simple facts to her, little short of miraculous, which had brought back her lover from the shadowy regions to which her imagination had consigned him.

"It was yesterday, only yesterday, dear Annie—no, the day before, that I met him—and, strange to say, I had been dreaming of him the night before!"

"Not at all strange," said Annie, laughing; "I dare say you had dreamt of him the night before that, and the night before

that also, and had lain down on purpose to repeat the dream, just like Goldsmith's miller Whang, when he had had one vision of the hidden treasure. However, there was a difference between his dream and yours, as his realisation was a ruined fortune, and yours will, I hope, be a brightened one. Yes, you have the advantage over Whang!"

"But, Annie, dear, do listen!"

"I will try to listen, darling!"

"Well, as I said before, I had been dreaming of Richard; I fancied that I was at Elmgrove again, and Ellen Ferrers was doing all she could to separate him from — But, Annie, you have five or six hairs as silvery as our father's!"

"True," said Annie, laughing; "I shall soon learn to say,

" ' My hair is grey, but not with years,
Nor grew it white in a single night,
As some have done through sudden fears.' "

If the Doctor were here, he would mutter 'grammars and geographies!' "

"Annie, was the Doctor jesting when he said, 'Suppose I were to make you an offer?'"

"I dare say he was."

"But if he were in earnest, would you accept him?"

"The world would call me mad if I did not. It would be a good money-match; and, considering the difference in our years, it would possess the advantage Bevil describes in Sir Richard Steele's play, 'One would soon be delivered from what they did not marry, the person, and enjoy what they did marry, the money.' But I see you look horrified, Ellen: allay your fears; the Doctor thinks not of me; no man in his senses would. I am poor, plain, and have not even the merit of good humour to make up for my deficiencies."

"I am sure you always had a sweet temper!" exclaimed Ellen, warmly.

"But you forget that Mrs. Maberly has been filing me with rather a sharp tool, and instead of smoothing me down, has managed to make sharp gaps in my temper. No, I can't pretend now to good humour; but I suppose that, like other splenetics, I shall some day soften down, in my own estimation, into a nervous invalid. Nervousness is such a pretty little diminuendo for ill-humour!"

"Nonsense, Annie, but you must tell me whether you would accept the Doctor."

“ Not if ‘ each particular hair’ of his head were a huge diamond, and he showered them all on me, like the windfall that Danae received from the father of the gods. No, I would rather live by selling lucifer-matches than sell myself; and if I would, Ellen, no one would buy me! But to retrace our steps, where did you find your Romeo? for ‘ that’s the theme.’ You had better go back to your dream, or you will be like the preacher who lost the thread of his discourse. ‘ We dream—we do but dream!’ ”

“ But I did something more than dream,” said Ellen. “ When I got up, I found Mrs. Ellington preparing to take her children to see some experiments at the Polytechnic, and ——”

“ There you found your Strephon! Not at all romantic! I dare say he was going down in the diving-bell. In novels, lovers sometimes meet at balls, theatres, and concerts, but never at the Polytechnic!”

“ Annie, you are incorrigible! I never told you I met him there.”

“ Well, go on your own way, Ellen.”

“ We spent three hours very pleasantly at the Polytechnic, and saw among other

things some very curious experiments in the atmospheric ——”

“ Ellen, I can’t listen ; you are like Pope’s woman—I forget her name—who could

“ ‘ Mark the figures on an Indian chest,’

while her adoring swain was making love !”

“ When we came out,” continued Ellen, “ the first thing I saw was an old woman with a basket of oranges ——”

“ You tantalising girl ! Was Richard hidden under them ?”

“ No, but they were ——”

“ Well, do pass over them. There’s nothing interesting in oranges. Ah ! I forgot that lovely song of Mignon’s, ‘ Kenst du,’ it begins.”

“ Having arrived at the persuasion that there is something poetical in oranges, will you venture on one now ?” said Ellen, who had a basketful beside her.

“ No, thank you, ‘ I should fall off,’ as Leigh Hunt said to a lady who made him the same proposition.”

“ Well, just as the old woman was crossing Regent Street, with her ponderous basket ——”

“ Ellen, your story and my interruptions

remind me of 'the farmer who was fond of ducks and green peas,' in the *Citizen of the World*."

"Annie, you are provoking! I never called you so before! Just as the old woman was in the act of crossing, a dashing cabriolet drove up at such speed that she and her oranges were in the most imminent danger."

"And Celadon rushed to her assistance!"

"Not at all. A gentleman in the cab called out to a pedestrian, in a voice whose disagreeable tone seemed very familiar to me,—'Huntly, old fellow, how are you? Isn't my turnout stunning? Don't I hold the ribbons well, that's all! Altogether first rate, ain't it?' 'Like its master, irresistible!' was the reply, as Mr. Vincent raised his whip to send on the horses in style. Unfortunately, the lash was very long, and struck the poor old woman in the eye; she had ignorantly approached too near, supposing that the fine gentleman would buy her oranges. With a scream of pain she let her basket drop, and its contents rolled in every direction; some of the oranges were smashed by carriage-wheels as they rolled along. A number were eagerly snatched by

the loitering boys, who seemed to think they had made a good harvest. I dare say I looked very absurd doing it, but I could not help stooping to pick up some of the oranges and replace them in the basket, more especially as I had heard the poor old woman exclaim, as soon as her anguish would allow her to perceive her loss—'Sure, an' all I had in the world's gone now! Sure, an' it was in the basket, an' nothin' but ruin's before me! Bad luck to him, anyhow! Sure, an' it's himself that's no jontleman. Niver once to say he was sorry afore he driv'd away with his fine box!'

"A crowd soon gathered round, and I began to feel uncomfortable; still I would not let false shame stop my doing a right thing. Mrs. Ellington stood on the pavement waiting for me. I am sure she would have helped me, if her courage had not failed her. Just as I had put the last orange which I could find, in the basket, and the poor woman was bemoaning at once her injury and her losses, a gentleman came up, inquired what was the matter, and examined the injured eye. He said that the poor creature would lose her sight, if it were not immediately attended to. Without adding

more he called a coach, put the poor old woman and her basket in, and desired the coachman to drive immediately to St. George's Hospital. Oh, Annie, it was Richard, and he had not seen me; or if he had, he had not recognised me. Joy and surprise alike chained me to the spot, and sealed my lips. Mrs. Ellington led me away; she saw something had happened, though she could not tell what. She knew little of my past history. I could not talk freely to her. Despite her kindness and sympathy, she has too much of the world's conventionalities about her, to render confidence easy.

"I spent the rest of the day in a bewildered but pleasant dream. True, I had to account to myself for Richard's seemingly strange conduct; but I was sure he could explain it most satisfactorily, and it never occurred to me to doubt him in the least degree.

"In the evening the Doctor came. I was in my own little sitting-room. He talked for a short time with the Ellingtons, and then came up to me. I think Mrs. Ellington must have told him of our morning's adventure, for as soon as he had seated himself, and

muttered a few words for his own edification, he began with, 'Tell me all about the old woman and her oranges.' When I had complied with his request, he exclaimed, abruptly, 'That's not all! Who was that good-looking jackanapes driving tandem?—tandem in Regent Street, eh? Did you say he was called Richard?'

" 'Oh no, sir!' said I, 'his name is Francis Vincent.'

" 'Some old flame of yours, Miss Helena?'

" 'No, sir,' I answered, hastily; 'if I did not think it wrong, I should say Mr. Vincent was the most hateful of men. An old acquaintance, truly, but recognised with more aversion than pleasure.'

" 'Well, don't look angry! I never saw you with such a vixenish look before. The truth is, it's in all women, and only wants an occasion to come forth! You didn't see any other old acquaintance, I suppose?' added he, looking very scrutinizingly at me. 'You didn't grow red, then white, then red and white again, just as you do now! You didn't tremble and shake just as you do at this minute!'

" 'I believe the Doctor was right; I was really trembling and colouring, and I am

afraid feeling rather vexed too; but it's impossible to be really angry with the Doctor, he is so good and kind. He looked at me with an odd smile, and added, 'You needn't look just as if you'd picked a pocket, but may just as well tell the story in a straightforward way. By a singular coincidence, you happened to know the name of the gentleman who took possession of the old woman and her traps!'

" 'Yes,' said I, hesitatingly.

" 'Who is he?'

" 'A clergyman; one of the clergymen of a parish in which I used to live.'

" 'Ah, good! very good, indeed! And he was a curate, a young, interesting curate, eh? Good-looking, student-like, Kirke-Whitish? Wrote verses, and lent you sentimental books!'

" 'I tried to laugh, but failing, cried; and then the Doctor got it all out of me in five minutes. He subsided with 'Humph!' a few minutes' silence, and then began his usual soliloquy.

" 'Silly girl, thought she'd more sense! But all of us make fools of ourselves at some period of our lives. Business must be looked into! Some young scapegrace, I'll

answer for it. Jilted her, no doubt. Fool of a girl! Women all alike—ready to die for a good-for-nothing dog! an honest man may go hang for them. Glad I never married—yet—— Well, I must be off. Good-bye, Miss Helena, going to a very interesting operation indeed; wouldn't miss seeing that leg off for something! I've still a hankering after surgery. Don't know the old orange-woman's name, eh? or the hospital she went to?

“‘I don't know her name,’ said I, ‘but she went to St. George's Hospital.’

“‘Very good; I shall peep at her; I should like to see that case myself.’

“So saying, the Doctor left, but on the staircase I heard, ‘Funny business, very; young people will be young! Black-coated fellows often not good for much; talk of red coats! a thousand times more mischief in a cassock! Funny business; thought it wasn't all grammars and geographies! Should like to cudgel the fellow!’

“When the Doctor was gone, I had a very good cry at having been led to say so many silly things; more especially as I felt sure that he would talk of me in his soliloquies all day long, and that before all sorts of

people. I was going to write it all to you, but that I knew I could tell you better. And then, dear Annie, yesterday, Richard walked in, and I felt as if I should die with joy. Some time passed before I was collected enough to understand what he tried to tell me; but at last he succeeded in making me comprehend, that he had been vainly seeking me almost ever since we parted at Elmgrove. The letter which I had written to him before leaving he had never received; consequently, he had no clue to my address, and all his efforts to trace me had proved useless. He has been some weeks staying in London, and was preparing to leave and take possession of a new curacy in Somerset, when he called at the hospital to inquire for his *protégée*, the old Irishwoman. The nurse of the ward asked his name, and then put a card in his hand—our dear old Doctor's—on which he read, 'Dr. Sinclair's compliments, and would be gratified by a few moments' conversation with Mr. Stancliff, if he could make it convenient to call in L—— Street.'

"Richard saw and comforted the poor old woman, and proceeded immediately after to L—— Street. The Doctor was engaged,

but begged Mr. Stancliff would amuse himself with a book for a few minutes. He accordingly took one from the table of the room into which he had been shown, and found, to his inexpressible surprise, my name written in the boldest and most striking characters on the cover. Of course the circumstance seemed very singular, and the more so as the book happened to be purely medical. Still, Richard did not suppose that the strange coincidence of names was other than accidental. But he took up another and another volume, and found the same thing repeated. Of course the Doctor had taken the trouble to write them in all for Richard's edification, and had left him alone, recommending a book, in order to bring about the *dénouement* he wished.

“When Dr. Sinclair came in, he was very cordial, shook Richard warmly by the hand, and said he was delighted to make his acquaintance. He praised his humanity to the oranges—to the orange-woman, I mean—and after a half-hour's conversation, during which the Doctor kept so wide awake that he did not once soliloquize, (though he had seemed all the time as if he wanted to intro-

duce some subject foreign to the conversation,) he exclaimed abruptly—‘I am just going to see a pet patient of mine!’ Here Richard started up, expressing a fear that he was detaining the good Doctor.

“‘Not at all,’ he replied; ‘pray sit down. The fact is, my patient is convalescent. A very interesting case, Mr. Stancliff, one of those poor, hard-worked, ill-used governesses. I dare say you know how they’re treated. It’s ‘do, dog, while you may!’ and then they’re turned off to starve. I’ve often stood up for them to some high and mighty dame, with more tin than temper; but I dare say they got worse snubbed afterwards, and had impudent insinuations thrown out about the old man that took their part. But this was a very interesting case—young creature—clergyman’s daughter—Miss Sherwood—same name as the woman that made so many books, you know—what business have women to make books?’

“Here Richard started up again, and begged so earnestly for further information, that the Doctor gave him a hard slap on his shoulder, and told him he ‘knew all about it, and that if he wished to renew his acquaintance with Ellen Sherwood, he

had better bestow himself in the corner of the brougham at the door;’ on that hint he acted.

“And now, dear Annie, comes the most joyous part of all (after the joy of finding Richard alive and well)—he has a nice curacy, 150*l.* a-year, and he says we can manage well with that. You are to give up ‘grammars and geographies,’ and the Doctor is to give me away on May-day. He and Richard have settled it all between them, and they seemed so pleased with their plans, and so pleased with each other, that I did not like to contradict them; and then, Annie darling, we are to set off straight for Banner Rise (the new curacy), where we shall have the prettiest of all pretty cottages. We shall be so happy, shan’t we? Do say yes, Annie! Shall we not be happy?”

“You will be, dear Ellen, with your sunny faith.”

“And you too, darling! Say that you will be happy, too!”

“Oh, yes!” replied Annie; but she answered with a sigh, and, wishing to turn the conversation, said, “How came the Ellingtons to ask me here?”

“I am not sure,” said Ellen, “but I sus-

pect that the Doctor was the plotter and contriver of that event, as he seems to be of everything pleasant. To tell the truth, though she is amiable, I don't think Mrs. Ellington particularly liberal, (of course that is accounted for by their not being rich,) and lately, I have strongly suspected that some invisible friend satisfies her for my extravagant style of boarding."

"I do not suspect, but am sure of it!" said Annie. "Dear, generous, old man, what can have inspired him with such benevolence?"

" 'He who feedeth the young ravens when they call upon him,' " answered Ellen, smiling through a mist of tears. "But, Annie dear, I hope the sense of our obligation to Dr. Sinclair does not oppress you."

"Oh, no!" said Annie, "benevolence like the Doctor's, is too unostentatious to be oppressive."

"Richard has given me a full description of our future home," continued Ellen; "I understand the plan of the rooms so well; there are casement windows, and a thatched roof. You are to have the west room (Richard says it is the prettiest in the house), and we mean to make it so nice.

There is jasmin twining over your window, and through its silver stars you will see the lovely Mendip Hills. There is to be a nice bookcase in your *sanctum*, and perhaps Charles Turner will let you have papa's books, and his old writing-table; you will like it better than a new one. Oh, Annie! Annie! I am so happy. Ought we not to be happy and grateful too, now that our storms and trials are all over—quite, quite over? Surely our blessed Father's spirit will be permitted to look down and smile on us in our little Paradise! And then, Annie, to think of the good we may do if we are humbly diligent in God's service. The dear, white-haired old men and women that we may visit and comfort; the little ones that we may train to virtue and happiness. I have but one fear, only one, that the life dear Richard has promised me may tempt me to make my Heaven below!"

CHAPTER IX.

WE will not tire our readers with a dissertation on the wedding of an obscure curate, who had scarcely a relation or friend, and the yet more obscure governess, who had still fewer of either. Yet a right merry wedding it was, if chastened joy and holy love can properly be called merry.

Lucan makes the magnificence of fallen Pompey's obsequies by describing what there was *not*, in the way of splendour, thus almost clothing meagreness in grand attire; so, if we were to attempt describing the above-mentioned wedding, we should say, it did *not* take place by licence, nor at St. George's, Hanover Square. The ceremony was *not* performed by his Grace of Canterbury. The bride did *not* wear magnificent jewels; she had *not* a Honiton lace dress, nor a Mechlin veil. There were *not* six bridesmaids in white dresses and pink satin jackets, each bearing a bouquet of choice exotics. There was *not* a brilliant train of equipages, nor a

crowd of noble relations and friends. There was *not* a *déjeûner* from Gunter's. The happy bride and bridegroom did *not* set off immediately after the ceremony for a Continental tour, or to the Lakes. In fact, they left undone a thousand indispensable things.

And yet it was a happy wedding, and the sun shone out on that bright May-day, and smiled on the innocent young bride, just as if it had come to say, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven!"

The breakfast—for there really was one—was given at the good Doctor's, and the bride and bridegroom, instead of rushing off in a paroxysm of hunger, remained a brief space to partake of it, and to share, too, the pleasure of the few friends that had gathered round them.

The friends in question were not rich nor fashionable, indeed, they were of the working classes, *i.e.*, poor, care-worn governesses, to whom Ellen wished to give a day's happiness on her own happy day.

The only person of any importance present was Mrs. Harrington, who, as the hospitable host was a bachelor, had kindly promised to do the honours for him.


Every one had some little offering to

make the fair bride, some trifling token of good-will. Mrs. Harrington gave her a purse of her own knitting; nothing in it, though, but two or three pieces of crumpled paper to show off the silk netting, but Ellen was not to take the paper out till she could fill the purse with coin.

"That will never be, unless I get a living," said Richard, laughing. "We shall soon slip down the hill, into a Mr. and Mrs. Primrose."

The Doctor sat at the table, eating very little, but busy helping everybody else, while the Jack-o'-lantern smile was playing over his merry face, and yet his eyes were moist. He had given the bride a handsome volume of *Punch*, and a sealed envelope containing a prescription, which was not to be opened till the next day; so Ellen did not dare to peep in, to see if there was anything else than the prescription.

"Ah!" sighed the Doctor, after a little preliminary soliloquizing, "I ought to have got married thirty years ago. What nonsense I'm talking. I hadn't a coat to my back thirty years ago, and little thought what life's 'wicissitoodinous' changes would do for me. The way I got on in life was by



bullying people. I took to bullying because it was the secret of Abernethy's success. You do look so comfortable at the place where my wife ought to be, Mrs. Harrington. I declare you brighten the atmosphere; it will be dingy enough to-morrow. Annie Sherwood, just sit there a minute; let's see how you'd look in that seat. Mrs. Harrington wont mind giving it up for a minute; I know she wont. There, very well. Hold up your head. A little more dignity. Let me have the pleasure of drinking wine with you, Mrs. Sinclair. Timothy, carry this wine to your mistress."

The Doctor was so well known that no one looked surprised at his jest, and he seemed so thoroughly to enjoy it, that Annie never dreamt of marring his sport, till he exclaimed, half in jest, half in earnest—

"Once for all, Annie Sherwood, and in the face of this good company, will you accept my sixty years, brown wig, brougham, and establishment?"

"Directly I have overtaken you in the journey of life, Doctor!" answered Annie, trying to laugh, though she was really very uncomfortable at the attention directed to her. Annie Sherwood little thought that

the day would come, in which she would look back with regret, and wish the Doctor's offer had been sober earnest, and her reply grateful compliance.

"I am sure any one might be glad to accept an offer so frankly made, and promising such happiness!" said Hortensia Maynard, with a sigh, and a very tender glance at the Doctor, but he neither saw nor heard her: his face was very red, his air "distract," and he was furiously taking snuff; he took it like the veteran Sir Charles N——, loose from his waistcoat pocket, and with a little silver spoon.

There was a carriage at the door. *Not* a chariot, with a pair of blood horses, and gold-laced postilions; but the same chocolate brougham which had taken some of the party to church. Then came a great deal of shaking of hands, and a great many civil speeches, which were all and each really meant, and that civil speeches seldom are. But then there were no great and fashionable people present, and what was better still, none who fancied themselves great and fashionable, unless indeed it were poor Hortensia Maynard, who had studied the peerage and baronetage so long, and knew so many titles, and had caught a glimpse of so

many honourables, that she really did fancy she was somebody. Poor Hortensia! it was such a harmless fancy, and it made her so happy!

Of course, the Doctor would kiss the bride, and the demand created neither blushes, nor exclamations, nor surprise; but the young girl held her fair cheek affectionately to the old man, to whom she owed life and happiness.

A minute later the curate (with his wife and sister) was gone; and the group of poor governesses returned to their labours, sighing, and wondering whether such a day would ever come for them! And the old Doctor stood in his lonely dining-room, ten times more lonely since he had seen it filled with cheerful faces, and he too sighed as he looked after the train of women, some very young, some old before their time, some really approaching a period of life when soul and body implore peace and rest! "Poor things! back to their dens, and bondage!" muttered the Doctor. "Well, they've had one pleasant day. God knows when they'll get another! Saucy girl, that Annie Sherwood! ugly, too, the world would say, but she's not, no, that she's not—she's handsomer than Ellen! Ah,

if I were thirty years younger, I would—yes, that I would! What an old fool I am! There's mischief in that girl, with all her high, noble spirit, and her pride! A true-hearted friend, but hang me if I should like such a determined wench for an enemy! Well, it's none of my business. Wonder whether she'll live with the Stancliffs, or go out again! Great fool if she does! but it's no matter to me, not the least in the world! How she laughed at my sixty years and wig, and all that silly speech I made! She's a clever girl, but as saucy a one as ever turned a man's brain! I'm too old to have mine turned, and it's no business of mine. Here, Timothy, take away this rubbish from the table, and bring me *The Lancet*."

"The cutting article, sir, for blood-letting?"

"No, you grinning monkey, the cutting article *on* blood-letting;" and the Doctor sat down, well pleased, and rubbed his hands, because he fancied he had made a joke!

CHAPTER X.

Six weeks from the day of her sister's happy bridal found Annie Sherwood again in London, seeking an "appointment," as Hortensia Maynard called it. Annie's was too proud a spirit to be easily reconciled to dependence on a scarcely known brother-in-law, but she had passed six very happy weeks with her dear Ellen, long enough to feel assured that *her* happiness was secure in her union with the most generous and noble-minded of men. So satisfied was Annie with the blessed lot of her heart's idol, that she returned to the struggle of life, almost reconciled to its difficulties, her character at once softened and elevated, and much of the painful past almost obliterated from her mind.

Ellen was sheltered from the world's cold atmosphere: *she* had courage to face a tempest. Ellen was placed beyond the reach of want; *she* could alone, endure many privations! Ellen was to be no more assailed by the taunts and insults addressed by the

vulgar-minded to their dependents; they might assail *her*, but they would recoil, and leave her unscathed! In fact, the aim of her life seemed accomplished; Ellen was happy, and surrounded by an atmosphere of hope and love.

It was not solely the desire of independence which led Annie to return to her arduous profession; it was at least as much the dread of diminishing the curate's small means, by increasing the expenses of the little household. Besides, Annie had a pretty little Utopian scheme of saving a small fortune from her salary for Ellen's future benefit. She forgot to calculate how many long years of anxious toil must pass, ere she could lay up even two or three hundred pounds from such a modest salary as she could command.

Annie Sherwood had come to London, and taken up her old quarters in N—— Street (there to exist on the three crumpled papers found at the bottom of Mrs. Harrington's wedding present to Ellen), till she could find employment; but she was in excellent spirits, and opened her new campaign with vigour. Her name was entered at nearly all the agencies in London; she duly

advertised in the *Times* and *Record*, and then tried patiently to await the result.

In the meanwhile she employed herself in writing a long story, very full of incidents, and clothed in beautiful language, but very deficient in many of the points which make a long story acceptable to a publisher or a reader.

There was no answer to Annie's advertisements, and the agencies failed to supply her wants. Annie looked forward to protracted trials, but she felt no dismay. "Ellen is safe and happy!"

With a steady hand, she transcribed her tale, and with unwearied patience carried it from publisher to publisher; they all declined.

Annie returned home, serious, but not cast down. She thought over her work, and detected or fancied she detected, a thousand faults in her MS. which in another attempt might be avoided. That very day, she began another tale; she wrote night and day, scarcely allowing herself time for sleep. There was no one to disturb her in her solitude: her few friends did not know she was in town, so they could not possibly interrupt her. In a fortnight her task was completed: it was a tale of love and jealousy, passions

which Annie had never known; but she threw her whole soul into the composition, and it had grown into a life-like reality which pleased and surprised herself. She did not sit down to criticise the imperfect work, but she knew it was true to nature, by the emotions it had produced in her own mind while her hand had traced each varied scene. And the obscure girl in that little room, felt for awhile unspeakably happy—happy in the consciousness of her own powers—yet more so, in that of untiring perseverance, which discouragement could neither subdue nor undermine.

But now came the question, how was the story to be disposed of? Could Annie present it to the very men who had just repulsed her?

While debating the point, a "vulgar reality" came to interrupt the author's thoughts; her landlady entered, with nothing more ethereal than a tray, containing something dignified with the name of dinner. A loaf of brown bread, a knife or two, a plate, a glass and a bottle of cold water (besides some mysterious-looking object wrapt in a piece of newspaper), were spread on the tray. "It's eating money, that it is,

Miss, eating cheese," said the fat landlady ; "if that bit didn't cost every farthing of fivepence-halfpenny, my name's not Mitchel, and yet Mr. Hogg pretended he let me have it cheap ; but my 'pinion is, a *rashern* of bacon 'd come cheaper, and be more relishin' like !"

"Thank you, it will do very nicely," said Annie, abstractedly. "The very thing I most wanted !" she continued.

"Is it, Miss ! Then I'm sure you're easy satisfied, if a bit of cheese can do it ; and you may thank 'eaven that's made you very humble-minded !"

Annie smiled ; she was indeed seemingly intent on the cheese, for she was reading the soiled paper that enclosed it, and which proved to be a leaf from a penny journal of amusement and graver pretension, despised indeed by the aristocrats, but circulated among the million through the length and breadth of the land ; and not there alone, but in our distant colonies, till it has become the type of civilization and entertainment among the masses, while its enterprizing publisher is fast realizing a princely fortune among the great capitalists of this age of gold.

"This will do !" exclaimed Annie, as she

read the publisher's address. "A thing like this is open to all competitors. I will try here, whether success or failure be the consequence. And if I do succeed," she added, with a radiant smile, "perhaps from this humble point I may struggle upwards; if that is not reserved for me, I will be the romancer of the people. Better, perchance, to make the warm hearts of the million beat with pleasure than to be coldly anatomized by the fastidious few!"

No sooner had Annie dispatched her humble meal, than she made up her parcel, wrote a note to the editor of the *F*—, and set off for the Strand. There arrived, she walked on in an absent fit, forgetting her intended patron's address, and only waking to remembrance, when she found herself just opposite Bolt Court, in Fleet Street. The busy tide of human life was flowing by, and she felt borne on in the wavy motion in a half-dreamy state, till an elbow, rudely thrust into her side, drove her under the courtway to recover breath and memory. When Annie came forth again, she was conscious that she had travelled a long way out of her road, and must retrace her steps; but she had been repaid by conjuring

up the image of the great and good Johnson lumbering up Fleet Street, his colossal mind full of great thoughts—too full to permit of his observing social life's every-day usages.

When Annie Sherwood found herself at the publisher's of the *F*——, she resolved, instead of giving her note, boldly to request an interview with the *great man*—for a great man Mr. —— is, though he does publish a penny paper. But little did our heroine know of the potentate she was attempting to approach. That was not one of his reception days; and regular reception days he had, like any crowned head! Regular days, too, on which he was invisible as Pope's "Eastern Kings," and on which his satellites affected a dignified mystery that would have led any one to suppose the *great man* had at least been summoned to take a seat in the Privy Council. To the *great man's* credit be it spoken, however, that his followers, however dignified in one sense, however touched with the *orgueil légitime* of being connected with such an establishment, have little of the pride of place in other respects; and aspirants for literary employment are never rudely repulsed in that office, however feeble, or even ridiculous, their efforts may be.

Finding she had as much chance of admittance to Buckingham Palace as to the editor of the *F*——, our heroine committed her MS. to the care of a particularly civil young man, who as yet was not elated to the seventh heaven by his position of confidential clerk to the establishment. Being told that in five or six weeks she would know the result of her application, she departed, with a confused idea that she had committed a very daring act; that she had been very near seeing a very great man, and that if her contribution were accepted, she would certainly have at least five pounds as its purchase money. What a sum! It seemed magnificent. Four or five pounds for literary labour! A labour of love to the young author; even such, in the warmth of composition, to the wearied scribbler, who has given the best years of his life, the brightest fancies of his heart and mind, for a mere nominal remuneration; given them, too, with the heart-sickening consciousness that they were to enjoy but an ephemeral existence, and never to be called by his name. The contributions to small periodicals are usually anonymous.

The stipulated number of weeks had

passed, and Annie had spent the interval in renewed efforts to obtain an "appointment" as governess; still no success attended her. With breathless eagerness she snatched the *F*—— to see if there were any answer for her. None! she turned quite sick and faint. She must try to forget her disappointment; the following week might bring her better news. She would not despond, for all was well with Ellen.

Annie went to see Mrs. Harrington. She found her kind, cordial, and unworldly as ever; and Bertha as happy, nay, happier than before. She renewed her acquaintance with the tribe of Belgravian governesses—a little world in themselves. Some so patiently enduring, so angelic; others so cunning, so revengeful in their bondage: some so full of love and devotion, because a little kindness had been shown them; others intriguing and vindictive, because their employers had shown them harshness, or, it might be, only that supercilious pride which the enlarged mind would despise too much to resent.

Poor Julie was as meek and amiable as ever; as eager to renew Annie's French lessons as she had been to begin them; but hard work, and a continued system of ill-

treatment, had told on the poor girl's health, and she looked pale and sickly. Annie hesitated to tax her strength by adding to her work, but Julie insisted that the lessons were rather a recreation than a fatigue, so they were resumed.

Hortensia Maynard came to see Annie, with a profusion of high-sounding promises of an immediate appointment. She really herself believed all she promised (she had so many noble and influential friends), and it would have been very ungrateful in Annie not to believe it too, so our heroine did her best to look credulous.

Annie had not been so fortunate as to meet Dr. Sinclair since her return to town, though she longed to see his genial face again. At length, after long waiting and watching, came an offer from the publisher of the *F*—— to purchase Annie's MS. at 20*l*.

If the mines of Potosi had been thrown open to our heroine, she could scarcely have felt more elated than she did with this first-fruits of her mental labour!

"Misfortunes come in groups," said a learned prelate; good fortune seems equally fond of society. The day that brought

Annie Sherwood her first literary gain, brought also a letter, addressed X. Y. Z., a very late answer to one of her numerous advertisements. Thus ran the epistle:—

“The person advertising (under the initials X. Y. Z.) for a situation as governess in a nobleman’s family, &c., is requested to call at Lady Adelaide Curzon’s, No. —, Grosvenor Square, to-morrow, at three o’clock precisely.”

“What a blessing!” exclaimed Annie. “Not a civil word in it! Nothing to take one in and ensure disappointment! Beyond the precincts of this pretending, detestable Belgravia. How happy I shall make Ellen with my next letter! To-night I will write, and tell her all!”

CHAPTER XI.

It was a magnificent mansion. The high priest of rank and fashion could not have desired a more gorgeous shrine on which to offer oblations to his divinity. The governess candidate stood waiting in the marble hall. Several servants were standing there in a group, discussing politics. Their master was one of the most active of the Commons' members—one of the most frequent and lengthy speakers, if not one of the best; he had been a member of a lately-dissolved Cabinet; of course his servants were politicians.

They were not actually rude to the "decayed gentlewoman" who had "come after the governess's place;" they only eyed her rather superciliously, and, deciding that she was not at all a "splendid woman," hoped Lady Adelaide would know better than to engage her. Annie heeded them not; she was absorbed in the contemplation of a statue from the divine hand of Canova, and so remained, till summoned to wait on Lady Adelaide

Curzon. She followed the page up the broad marble stairs, and into a suite of drawing-rooms, which even in daylight dazzled the unaccustomed eye, so rich were they in draperies, mirrors, alabaster groups, and other objects of ornament. Not that the luxurious prodigality was too great, nor that it outstepped the bounds of refined taste. Every here and there, too, something of a more sober hue occurred, chastening the general tone, which otherwise might have been too gorgeous. In a *fautenil*, leaning very far back, but yet gracefully, sat a lady who might have been about thirty years of age. She appeared immensely tall, even seated, her figure exquisitely proportioned, her head proudly beautiful; it might have been the head of Juno, and was that of Lady Adelaide Curzon.

How supremely beautiful she looked as she turned round that classical head, whose bright yellow locks were arranged like those of a statue, and displayed a set of features as faultless as artist or sculptor ever conceived, a finely-moulded brow, lips chiselled and still retaining the bright vermilion glow of earliest youth! Her eyes—large, violet-coloured eyes—seemed to glow and melt at

the same moment, and were shaded by rather dark lashes. Her complexion was not that pink and white which someway or other one associates with a country dairy, but pure white, like Carrara marble.

Yes, Lady Adelaide was a beautiful creature, most beautiful; but there was something in that exquisite face like a tideless sea—something which said, “beneath this cold, grand surface lies no passion; this white bosom has never beat with love, or joy, or fear, or sorrow; seldom, if ever, with anger, as the clear, unlined brow shows.” And truly Lady Adelaide had no passions, unless pride of position and pride of beauty be passions, and they only made her calmly satisfied with herself and with her place in society. She had never met with a human being sufficiently daring to dispute her pretensions, so nothing had ever occurred to disturb the calm repose so habitual to her.

The lady’s dress was as faultless as her person; a plain skirt of white merino, a jacket of deep purple velvet, untrimmed, and tight to the throat. No ornaments—not even a ring on the white, cold-looking hands, except the wedding circlet, which Lady Adelaide had assumed without one throb of

joy or reluctance, because she was of a marriageable age, because she had no better offer, because she had no fortune, and because the Hon. Mr. Curzon had a large income and a brilliant place in society.

On a low chair, beside Lady Adelaide, sat an ugly, mean, miserable-looking woman, her companion; not old, perhaps, though she seemed fifty; and her worn, sharp face, little grey eyes, and withered skin, served admirably to show off the proud beauty beside her. She had been reading to Lady Adelaide.

"Dobson," said her ladyship.

"Yes, your ladyship," said Miss Dobson, reverently rising—she always rose when Lady Adelaide did her the honour of addressing her; and she thought there was something in the tone of the "Dobson" which implied that a communication of some importance was about to be made. "Dobson, is it not to-day that that person is to call about the situation?"

"If your ladyship pleases."

"Did you say in the note at what hour?"

"Yes, if your ladyship pleases, at three o'clock."

"What o'clock is it, Dobson?"

"Nearly three, your ladyship."

"Three! if she is not here now, I shall be kept waiting! Ring the bell, Dobson."

At this moment the governess entered. Undazzled by the brilliancy of the apartment, Annie stood, really fascinated by the beauty of that queen-like looking woman. She remained spell-bound at the entrance of the apartment, and thus prevented the page's shutting the door.

"What gaucherie!" murmured Lady Adelaide. "I cannot make myself heard at this distance." The latter words were intended for the governess, but the preceding ones had reached her ears, and while they brought the blood to her cheeks, they also restored her self-possession. Annie advanced, quite free from embarrassment; and as Lady Adelaide made no demonstration of intending her to be seated, she took a chair uninvited.

"You need not leave the room, Dobson," said her ladyship; "you can go on with my purse."

"Yes, my lady."

"You are the person who advertised in the *Morning Post*?" asked Lady Adelaide, turning to Annie.

"I am," replied Annie, who had suddenly acquired quite a democratic aversion to

titles, and felt that she could not say "your ladyship."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-four."

"You look older."

"Possibly."

"Where have you lived?"

"In the family of Mr. Maberly."

"Don't know the name; what is he?"

"Mr. Maberly is not in any profession; he lives in ——"

"Oh, I suppose one of those petty squires who imagine themselves people of importance. What can you teach?"

"The usual branches of education."

"Anything else?"

"Yes, Latin and Greek, and the elements of mathematics."

"To what age can you go on?"

"If you mean to refer to my pupils' age, I could teach a boy till he reached his fourteenth year."

"Do you know French?"

"A little."

"German and Italian?"

"I read both."

"You are not afraid to undertake boys?"

"I am not."

"Three?"

"Or more."

"You are determined, decided in character? But I need not ask;" and Lady Adelaide almost smiled, as she glanced over the plain pale face before her. "Resolution will be wanted with my sons if they are to progress. They must be well educated, but I will not have their natural characters interfered with. Your business will be to furnish their heads, and prepare them for Harrow. There must be no attempt to sentimentalize them, or make them unfit for the position they will occupy in life. What salary do you ask?"

"Sixty guineas," said Annie, with a boldness which quite surprised herself.

"Very well; I think you will suit me. If Mrs. Maberly's reply to my inquiries should be satisfactory, I shall engage you. Write your address. If you come to me, remember there must be no conversation with the servants. My last governess was dismissed in consequence of her over-fondness for the housekeeper's room. Dobson, go on with the book; where were you?"

"I—I'm afraid I've lost the place, your ladyship."

"Stupid of you ! don't let it happen again. What o'clock is the carriage ordered for ?"

"Four, please your ladyship."

"Well, then, leave off ; ring the bell for Benson."

"Yes, your ladyship."

"Dobson, do try to speak in a pleasanter voice."

"Yes, my lady."

"And Dobson——"

"Yes, my lady."

"While I am out, go up to the school-room, and read a story to the young gentlemen. I promised to take Sydney with me, and a story will put it out of his head."

"Very well, your ladyship."

"Wasn't that person ugly, Dobson ?"

"Very ugly, your ladyship."

"Do you believe she's only twenty-four ?"

"Not the least, my lady ; and I only wonder that she should hope to impose on your ladyship's discernment."

"Dobson, you may have my violet satin dress ; but take it before Benson finds you out."

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Annie withdrew from Lady Adelaide's presence, it was with a strong inclination to dive further beneath that icy surface, and discover if anything of human feeling dwelt in her. She did not feel so indignant at her hauteur as might have been expected, for her mind had been amused, and was so still, with the obsequiousness of the dependent.

When Annie was pursuing her way home, she encountered Dr. Sinclair, who nearly shook her hand off, while he inquired with fatherly interest after Ellen. "And you, what are you doing?" he asked.

"Oh, Doctor!" replied Annie, with an assumption of proud importance which she counterfeited wonderfully well, "I am—if the stars are propitious—going to be promoted to great honour."

"What fresh mischief brewing?"

"I am about to be 'nominated to an

appointment' in the family of Lady Adelaide Curzon."

"Lady Adelaide Fiddlestick! I'll tell you what, you'll put your foot in it!"

"In what, Doctor?"

"In a worse scrape than you've been in yet."

"How so?"

"Why, as far as pride is concerned, you might as well have hired yourself out to Master Beelzebub in person. I know a good deal about these Curzons. The eldest boy—Sydney, they call him—fell down and broke his arm; a bad case; fever ensued; surgeon in attendance called me in. I saved the boy's life; in return, the young dog drew himself up for all the world like his mother, Madam Juno, and asked, 'Do you know who I am?' because I proposed his taking a dose he did not approve of. There's an epitome of the family spirit!"

"But he is so young," said Annie; "he cannot know much better."

"The boy is the father of the man, Miss Sherwood."

"True; but I shan't be troubled with him when he is a man. What sort of person is Mr. Curzon?"

"A good sort of man ; talks away in the House, and sometimes says a clever thing, quite by accident. Like the rest of the family, he overrates himself. Something in him of the fellow that *Queen* Jamie so cleverly put down with 'Hoot awa', mon ; I did nae ken Adam was a younger son of the Lumley family !' Mr. Curzon walks as if the earth weren't good enough for him to tread on ; but he's a gentlemanly, handsome fellow."

"What a beautiful creature Lady Adelaide is !" said Annie.

"A beautiful d—— !" exclaimed the Doctor.

"Doctor ! Doctor ! You want my dear Ellen beside you, to say with her gentle gravity, ' You are wrong, Doctor ; very, very wrong. ' "

"So I should be, if I used the word for profane swearing ; but I pronounce it advisedly, as the only one to describe Lady Adelaide Curzon. As calm and cold as she looks, only do something to rouse her, and you will wake a demon. Go to her, and you'll run your neck into a halter. An ordinary woman would do well, particularly if she had a spice of the toad-eater in her,

like that thing Dobson ; but your spirit will never brook the treatment you'll meet with in the Curzons' house. You wont sit down in a corner, and knit a mitten or some other gimcrack, and cast your eyes down, and say 'yes, your ladyship;' 'thank your ladyship.' No; there'll be a pitched battle before a month !"

"But I must go there, Doctor."

"Must! You're a mule if you do!"

"Never mind, Doctor, I must; it's my 'kismet,' as the Mussulmans say; I am sure it is. Do you remember how earnestly Scheherazade desired to be the wife of the Sultan, though likely to be adorned with the bow-string the day after the accomplishment of her wish? So earnestly do I desire to see more of the Curzons' domicile. Besides, I have begun to make some verses on the Canova in the hall; I must see the object of inspiration again, if they are ever to be finished."

"Object of nonsense!" growled the Doctor; "what right has a governess with verse-making? Well, Lady Adelaide wont leave much poetry in you, I promise. I repeat, you'll repent it if you put your foot in that house. When you do, remember my words!"

"I will, Doctor; good-bye. Thank you for all your kindness, and not least for your good advice."

"None of which you mean to take?"

"I'm afraid I can't take it."

"Why, pray?"

"To tell you the truth, I have golden reasons. Lady Adelaide gives sixty guineas a year—elsewhere I should probably have half the sum."

"If it's only money——" began the Doctor.

"Oh, no, dear sir, not that alone," interrupted Annie, quickly; "but this offer of Lady Adelaide's seems my only chance; I dare not let it slip by. You don't know the difficulty of procuring an engagement; I have often walked a dozen miles a day in search of one."

"Poor girl! poor girl! I hate the trade," said the Doctor, brushing his own hand across his face, and all the time holding Annie Sherwood's in his, as if he were going to say something more—something kind, something very foolish, perhaps, for he could not bear to see any one in distress; but by the time the words were gathered together, the little hand had slipped out of his, and

Annie was gone. "Very nearly put my foot in it," said, or rather muttered, the Doctor, as he rushed into his brougham; "very nearly, indeed. What an old fool I am! How the wench would have laughed at me! Makes verses, indeed! Yes, and I dare say would rather live in a garret with some threadbare artist, or crack-brained poet, than put up with the old Doctor and his comforts. Comforts, indeed! What comforts has a lonely old fellow like me—with no prospect of any one to close his eyes, but a mercenary crew? Well, the girl sha'n't starve when I'm gone, nor toil for proud upstarts, really her inferiors. She shall have—Timothy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nothing; never mind. I want nothing. Tell John to drive faster. What an old fool!"

* * * *

Before a week had elapsed, Annie was summoned, not to a second conference with Lady Adelaide, but to take up her residence at the lordly mansion of the Curzons.

An unusual degree of animation filled Annie's mind. She felt like the soldier girding on his harness for the coming battle.

On arriving at G—— Square, she was shown to her rooms, of course at the top and back of the house. She well knew where she should find them beforehand. They were not exactly dirty nor shabby, but denuded of everything approaching comfort or neatness. No curtains shaded the windows, nor even a linen blind. The coarse drugget which partially covered the floor was of the most sombre and ugly hue which could have been chosen, and every article of furniture appeared to have been selected for its very incongruity. This seems to be the rule in very splendid mansions; everything unfit to be seen is condemned to the school-room, even the cracked, ill-matched pieces of china.

Annie, though utterly careless of personal indulgence, was peculiarly sensible of the annoyance occasioned by such a *coup d'œil*; it was like jarring discords to a refined ear. She had, however, learnt to command, not only her words, but her countenance.

Little by little her school-room assumed a more habitable appearance. Some of the more unsightly objects were turned out, and before the end of the week she had curtains at the widow, concealing the uninviting prospect without, and even a neat cover on

the table—which article of furniture the young gentlemen had adorned with hieroglyphics which would puzzle a Champollion to decipher.

On the first day of Annie's residence in G—— Square, she found her pupils on her arrival engaged in a very noisy game.

They were beautiful boys—the eldest especially, though his beauty was somewhat marred by the haughty, defiant air which he wore even in play with his little brothers.

As the new governess entered, the game was momentarily suspended. The three boys turned; the two younger laughed and nodded; the eldest gave one sharp, quick look, which plainly said, "Remember who I am!" Then turning his back, he continued his game.

Annie passed on into her sleeping-room, took off her bonnet and shawl, and returning, rang the bell. The boys were astonished; the servants astonished and indignant too. The tailor's daughter never rang the bell. "I will trouble you for tea." A daring woman was the new governess! She turned to the children, and spoke in a clear, low voice, distinctly heard through the din. "Sydney, I wish to speak to you; Herbert

and Walter, you may go on with your game."

Sydney Curzon looked round, surprised at the rash interruption. He raised his eyebrows; but there was something in the new governess that made him see she meant what she said, and that it would not be quite so easy to manage her as it had been the tailor's daughter. So the young aristocrat walked up to the pale little woman, debating in his mind whether it was her voice or her eye that had moved him.

Annie then proceeded to examine him, and found him lamentably ignorant even for so young a child. In answer to her inquiry as to the reason of his deficiencies, he said, "I did not choose to learn—it worries me, and I always make a point of letting people know who I am!"

"And I," said Annie, very coolly, "always make a point of letting people know *what* I am; you will soon find out."

"I have found out already."

"That is well—it is a good beginning. And now tell me, are you fond of reading?"

"Don't know—really never tried," said the boy, yawning. "I want to go; haven't you done?"

"No, not quite—bring me your school-books?"

"Haven't any."

"Indeed! how have you learnt?"

"Oh, by conversational instruction! Only old-fashioned teachers use books. By the by, mamma says you're to read stories to us."

"Does she?"

"Yes, I shall fetch *Tales from Shakspeare*. You must read *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*."

"I shall not read this evening, Sydney."

"Shall not?"

"Shall not," repeated the same quiet voice. You may return to your play. At breakfast I will explain to you what I wish you to do."

Sydney looked again at the new governess, and each look more clearly expressed, "Do you know who I am?" and the new governess looked again at the proud boy, and her calm face as plainly said, "You shall see *what* I am."

Sydney Curzon was very like his mother—beautiful, proud, and selfish; but then a child's heart is rarely without some bright spot to relieve the darker shades.

The two younger boys were wayward, selfish, and rebellious, but not quite so de-

terminated. They, too, were largely imbued with the aristocratic spirit, but in them it took a less offensive, though more vulgar tone. Their ideas of self-importance appeared such as were derived from the tuition of mean dependents, who, from the first dawning of their intelligence, had taken pains to impress upon them that they "were not *nobody's* children." Early accustomed to the most fulsome flattery, the three boys seemed fully persuaded that the whole world was made for them. They were not fond of their mother; she had not heart enough to attach them to her. Hitherto their every whim had been gratified—more, however, from Lady Adelaide's apathy than from her express desire. She had seen very little of her children, but she was proud of their beauty, and sometimes took Sydney out with her, to display him. In some of their drives she had accidentally discovered that the boy knew nothing, and was not likely to learn anything. She had consequently dismissed the tailor's daughter, and engaged Annie Sherwood.

Lady Adelaide saw at a glance that Annie was exactly the person to manage her children. Her ladyship had very good sense.

She discovered that the new governess had a strong, determined will. She saw that, even in her manner towards herself, but she was beginning to be tired of sycophants; the contrast between Annie and Dobson amused her. If the new comer presumed, and in addition to that calm, independent manner, presumed on familiarity, Lady Adelaide could instantly check her—no one so well knew how.

Lady Adelaide would, of course, see very little of her children's governess; one half-hour daily at luncheon, otherwise never.

At the table, of course, Miss Sherwood would have the discretion to be silent; and she was so plain that no one would think of noticing her. Altogether she would do very well, and Lady Adelaide gave herself no further trouble to know the person to whom her children's best interests were to be entrusted, but consigned them to the care of the stranger governess, whose salary would be regularly paid, and who would, of course, carry on her work in silent contentment. Annie was well pleased that she had not a Mrs. Maberly to deal with, who, with equal haughtiness, had much less understanding than Lady Adelaide, and effectually coun-

teracted every effort to improve her children.

Sydney Curzon was endowed with excellent natural abilities, and when his intellect was once aroused, he learnt with rapidity and success ; but in his character it seemed that no change could be effected. His intelligence became daily more developed under skilful culture, and the child learnt something of his own powers. Ambition was awakened ; he knew his teacher's superiority, and he was proud of her praises, but his young heart was still cold and selfish.

The Curzons were all clever children, and their habitual indolence gradually yielded to more skilful training than that to which they had been accustomed. When the day had passed satisfactorily, Annie drew forth "Shakspeare," and read aloud, at once for Sydney's edification and reward ; and while she read, her voice, her countenance, so truly bore the impress of the characters she sought to portray, that even the selfish boy's heart beat with delight, and he would fix his intelligent eyes on the reader's face with absorbed delight. In fact, Annie Sherwood's reading of "Shakspeare" was not reading ; it was more like animated, though

subdued, recitation. She had, besides, the art of changing her voice as she delineated separate characters, which produced almost the illusion of acting. "Beautiful! oh, beautiful!" Sydney would exclaim as he listened to her; but when Annie closed the volume, and thought that perchance his heart was beginning to warm towards her, she found that he relapsed immediately into his habitual state of feeling.

There were few struggles in the Curzons' school-room, and no scenes. Annie had learnt a lesson at Mrs. Maberly's, cautiously to avoid all display of natural feeling, to command down excitement, preserve an unruffled exterior, and enforce respect if she could not win love. And yet she longed to love those fair children, and to be loved by them, and again and again hoped that time would draw their affections towards her; but whenever she attempted to show them any token of affection, the little fellows would burst from her impatiently, and though they did not venture on rebellion, they had a thousand ways to show that they appreciated her position and their own. Oh, the sickness of heart that comes over one who has to deal with a *worldly child*!

Annie's plan with her pupils had been equally successful when applied to the aristocratic servants. The calm, quiet tone of her requests told with them far more than querulous complaints would have done; and any omission which savoured of disrespect was reproved with a gentle dignity which seldom failed to ensure more attention.

Not long after Annie's arrival, an opportunity occurred of trying her newly-formed tactics. At six o'clock on a cold winter's morning, a servant held a candle beside her bed, waking her at once with the glare and the words, "I've had orders to call up all the servants at six o'clock every morning."

"Have you?" said Annie, in her quietest tone; "but you have mistaken my room for one of theirs! Be so good as to bring me some warm water at half-past seven." Such a mistake never again occurred, and Annie's material comfort daily increased; but the artificial existence she now led, ere long began to tell upon her health and spirits.


CHAPTER XIII.

THREE months had passed; and though Annie had daily seen Lady Adelaide at luncheon, there had been no conversation between them, at least nothing meriting the name of conversation. The children talked very little in their mother's presence, except Sydney, who was in all respects a perfect little man of the world, and conversed freely on all subjects. To give an idea of his precocity it may be remarked, that he perfectly understood the nature and value of an entail, and was in the habit of saying that no conduct of his could possibly prevent his coming into possession of the family estate at his father's death—he could not be disinherited. He was accustomed to take his papa's seat at the table opposite to Lady Adelaide, help whatever dish was before him, and drink wine with her ladyship with most gentlemanly ease.

Annie had not yet seen Mr. Curzon; he

never missed the House during the session, and spent a great deal of time at his club. The new ministry already appeared tottering. Mr. Curzon, an incarnation of rabid Toryism, hoped his party would soon return to office. Of course, he was too much pre-occupied to be often at home ; besides, the home circle had few charms for him. He had married for love ; indeed, his attachment to Lady Adelaide had been most fervent, amounting to romantic passion ; but not very long after the wedding, he had discovered that his beautiful bride had given him a hand without a heart, and did not even possess sufficient sensibility to regret the sacrifice she had made. He was naturally affectionate and domesticated, and keenly felt his disappointment. Two or three efforts to win his wife's confidence and affection Mr. Curzon made ; they utterly failed ; and to forget his loveless, joyless home, he threw himself into the arena of politics, till politics became his passion.

Lady Adelaide and Mr. Curzon never quarrelled ; a cold, undisturbed harmony reigned between them. Nothing could exceed the formal politeness with which the man of the world treated the once adored



wife, except the cool civility with which that formal politeness was returned.

Such was the ordinary coolness of their greeting, that when Mr. Curzon entered one day unexpectedly at luncheon time, and, bowing to Lady Adelaide, accepted her invitation to take a sandwich, and seated himself at the table, Annie had not the most distant conception that he was the husband of the proud beauty, and the master of the mansion.

Mr. Curzon looked about thirty-eight; he was a strikingly handsome man, with a great air of dignity and an absorbed manner. He scarcely spoke, unless in answer to a question.

"Is Lord —— likely to keep in?" inquired her ladyship.

"Three weeks, perhaps. Has Townsend called?"

"Ask John. I can't remember. Can you escort me to the opera to-night?"

"Sorry I can't. Must be at the House. Claude Douglas will."

"I don't like Claude Douglas."

"Don't you? Send for Fanshawe."

"I will."

"Sorry I can't go with you. I know it looks boorish; but the truth is, I'm fagged."

"Home late last night, I suppose?"

"About three. What opera to-night?"

"'Lucrezia Borgia.'"

"Sorry I can't hear it. Ah, Sydney! how d'ye do? Haven't seen you this week!"

"Very well, thank you."

And Mr. Curzon was gone, to meet his family again (by accident) in the course of a few days. On his first entrance he had given a cursory glance to Annie, nodded, and said "Good morning;" but the overbearing haughtiness of his manner had appeared so offensive to her, that she turned away her head, and seemed neither to observe the action nor the word.

"How do you like papa?" asked Walter, when they had left the table.

"I really don't know; I have not seen him," said Annie.

"Why, didn't you know that that was papa who came in at luncheon?"

"No, I did not."

"Well, now you know it was he, how do you like him?"

"I cannot tell you till I know more of him."

"Then you'll never tell us at all," said Sydney; "you will never know more of him."

"But I can tell you how he likes *you*, Miss Sherwood," said Walter, laughing, "and that is, not at all."

"What shall we read to-night?" said Annie, willing to change the subject.

"*Hamlet*," exclaimed Sydney, with animation. "Do you know, Miss Sherwood, when you're reading I quite love you; but, somehow, the minute the book is shut I am myself again, and all the love is gone. I'll tell you what I should like."

"What should you like, Sydney?"

"Miss Sherwood, why do you call me Sydney? Did you call your last pupils by their Christian names?"

"Certainly I did."

"But I wish you would not do it to me. You might call me Master Curzon. When you call me Sydney, it looks as if you forgot who I was."

"Oh, no! I never forget who you are, nor what I am! mind *you* don't. But what should you like, Sydney?"

"To get Lord Claude up here one day, and you to read one part in *Julius Cæsar* and he the other; it would be just like a real play. Lord Claude reads as well as you do, and he is so clever—so very clever."

"But who is Lord Claude?"

"Oh, Lord Claude Douglas! don't you know? He's half a Scotchman, and half a Frenchman. He's Lord Dryburgh's younger brother. His mother was a Frenchwoman, and he was born and brought up in France. I don't know whether he's really handsome, but he has such magnificent eyes. I'll tell you what they are like. Suppose you had a large jewel, so deep and dark, almost black, and you put a mind behind it and let it shine through."

"I know what you mean," said Annie.

"Yes, you always understand me. His eyes are jewels, through which a soul shines," repeated Sydney, "and he is like Hamlet; he always makes me think of Hamlet, except when he laughs merrily, and joins in our games. And he has such a beautiful voice, Miss Sherwood; nobody's singing is half so beautiful as Lord Claude's speaking. I shall bring him up to see you some day."

"No, you must not, Sydney."

"Why not, Miss Sherwood?"

"Because I say *veto*; you can construe that?"

"And I say *voleo*; and you can construe that, Miss Sherwood."

"I shall not read *Hamlet* to-night."

"Oh, pray, pray do!"

"No, I intend to write all the evening."

Mr. Curzon said one day cursorily to his wife—"Was that Miss Sherwood I saw at luncheon on Tuesday?"

"Yes."

"She has neither air nor manner. I never saw such a plain woman—so dead-and-alive looking. I should fear her intelligence is not very bright. I hope the school-room business goes on properly?"

"I suppose it does."

"Have you been up at all lately?"

"No, I have not had time."

"Not had time, Adelaide?"

"No; but if you have any doubts, you had better examine the boys. You have my leave to go to the school-room whenever you please. I am not jealous. I am not a Duchesse de Praslin, nor is Miss Sherwood a De Luzy."

"Jealous!" repeated Mr. Curzon, with a sigh; "no, Adelaide, you never knew jealousy—nor love."

"Then I have never given you an hour's jealousy or uneasiness—more than can be said of most wives. I hate sentiment; no-

thing tears the face to pieces so much as what the French call *les passions*. Go upstairs whenever you like."

"I will."

Mr. Curzon found time, two months later, to inquire into the progress which his children had made in their education. On entering the school-room he slightly bowed his proud head. The governess rose and returned the salutation, as slightly as she could without being actually rude.

Mr. Curzon asked the question usually addressed to governesses—"Have you walked to-day?" Nobody thinks of saying anything else to a governess. Sometimes the sentence is uttered by way of encouragement; sometimes to denote condescension; and is always accompanied by a "*Don't-be-frightened*" look. Perhaps the sentence in question is chosen on the principle which Chesterfield advocates, of leading people to speak on the subject with which they are most familiar, and which consequently they can best discuss.

"The children have been in the Park," replied Annie, supposing that the question related to them.

Mr. Curzon took up a grammar, and

silently turned over the leaves. Though proud, he was a kind-hearted man, and did not want to frighten the governess by a set examination; he thought he could make his inquiries appear accidental. After a good deal of unskilful manœuvring, such as is often displayed when one tries to do an *accidental* thing on purpose, Mr. Curzon succeeded in drawing forth some extremely unsatisfactory replies to his questions. The two younger boys were afraid of him, and fear produced absurdly stupid answers. Sydney was impatient for his father's absence, as he was longing for a wild game, and his replies were worse than his brothers'. A book of arithmetic lay on the table, so intricately written, that it was a fitter study for mathematicians than mere children. With that usual discrimination shown by people who have never taught in their lives, Mr. Curzon pitched on the most difficult problem he could find, and purposely clothing the statement of the question proposed, in more bewildering phraseology than the author of the book had used, he elicited such an absurd solution from his son and heir that he lost all patience, and exclaimed,—
“ You are either a great blockhead, Sydney,

or you have been badly taught." Then turning to the governess, who was looking on with a very calm and unmoved countenance, he added, "Miss Sherwood, this boy is shamefully backward for his age; you must really get him on."

"His progress will chiefly depend on his own abilities and industry," said the governess, coldly. "I neither boast of my skill nor zeal; my duty I shall honourably endeavour to perform. Should I fail, after a reasonable time, in producing the result you desire, you will dismiss me, or I shall relinquish my charge."

Mr. Curzon bit his lip, and looked with a very surprised air at the bold speaker. Her pale, quiet face was as unmoved as if it had been cut in stone. He was astonished, very much astonished; he took a particular dislike to her; but yet, though impressed with the idea that she was a most disagreeable woman, and that she had not made Crichtons of his sons, he went away with the conviction that she was precisely the person for her office.

"Well, what result, Mr. Curzon?"

"Not a very satisfactory one, Lady Adelaide; the boys know little enough."

"I hate the bore," said Lady Adelaide ;
"but I will look out for another governess
if you like."

"By no means," said Mr. Curzon ; "let
Miss Sherwood go on. What a very odd
person she is !"

"Very odd, indeed ; one can't call her
familiar ; nothing can be colder or more distant ;
but she is provokingly independent."

"A very strange person—very strange,
indeed," resumed Mr. Curzon. "Do the boys
seem to like her ?"

"I think not ; they stand in awe of her,
however. Sydney, though, prefers her company
to that of any one else ; she seems to
amuse him by reading and talking."

From that time forth, whenever Mr.
Curzon met Annie, which was very seldom,
he favoured her with the shadow of a bow, the
faintest of all inclinations of the head.
"Nothing seemed to live 'twixt it and
nothing." But he never again asked her if
she had walked.

* * * *

It was Sydney's eager voice on the stairs:

"Do, pray, come up ; I know you will like
her !"

"Probably ; but I can't go up," replied a

voice which, as it echoed up to her lonely room, reminded Annie of Sydney's description; it was more musical than music.

"Then you're very disagreeable, Lord Claude, and very ill-natured; and I hate you, that I do."

"I am sorry for that, Sydney; but you know I am a resolute man."

"Now, why wont you come up?" said Sydney, changing to a coaxing tone.

"I have told you. I think Miss Sherwood would be displeased: I have no right to intrude on her privacy."

"Displeased!" repeated Sydney; "what right has she to be displeased? It is not her house, nor her school-room. Mamma pays her just as she does the housekeeper, or the cook, or the butler, and they never show any dignified airs. Come along, Lord Claude."

"No, Sydney, I will not."

"Why—why wont you?"

"You cannot understand my reasons, Sydney."

"Well, but suppose Miss Sherwood were to give leave?"

"That might alter the case. I suppose your governess is a lady, and she ought to be treated with consideration."

"I don't know about that," said Sydney ;
"we found our last to be a tailor's daughter."

"But Miss Sherwood, from your description, must be very different?"

"Oh, yes; quite different. Miss Smith was stupid; Miss Sherwood is the most entertaining woman I ever met with in the course of my life!"

"Indeed! your experience of life must have been immense, and your acquaintance with ladies proportionably extensive!"

"You need not laugh at me, Lord Claude; I can tell you I'm not quite such a block-head as papa thinks; but I shall go and see what she says."

Sydney burst into the school-room, exclaiming—

"Miss Sherwood, I am going to bring up Lord Claude Douglas! I told you I would. You don't mind, do you?"

"Not the least, as I am just going away!" replied Annie, leaving the room by another door at the moment she spoke.

"Provoking!" muttered Sydney, returning to his friend. "Did you ever see anything like this in your life?"

"I have met with people of spirit, if that is what you mean."

"Did you hear what she said?"

"Yes, very well."

"Now, has she not a beautiful voice, even when she says disagreeable things?"

"Her voice is beautiful."

"Oh, I do wish you could hear her read *Hamlet*, or *King Lear*. It is beautiful, my Lord; much finer than all the singing in the drawing-room."

"You are very fond of Miss Sherwood, Sydney?"

"Fond of her! Dear me, not at all; only she amuses me!"

"She amuses you?"

"Yes, to be sure; but she's very ugly, Lord Claude—very ugly, indeed! I know you would think her ugly. And yet, do you know, I have seen her look handsome; yes, handsomer than mamma. It was when she was reading *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and there was a gleam like lightning playing over her face."

"Sydney, you make me doubt whether you are ten years old, or five-and-twenty."

"Never mind, Lord Claude, I shall be as big as you some day. You will let me ride with you to-day?"

"Yes, if you are allowed."

"What is your favourite horse called?"

"The Knight of Snowdon, Sydney."

"Ah, I know him," said Sydney; and the boy began to recite with wonderful precision and propriety—

"Upon his brow," &c.

"Sydney, your intellect is growing; I hope your heart will keep pace with it in growth," said Lord Claude. The boy was silent, but his beautiful lip slightly curled with something that seemed meant for scorn

CHAPTER XIV.

LORD CLAUDE DOUGLAS was the younger son of the late Marquis of Dryburgh, and brother of the actual representative of the marquisate. His father, before coming to the title, had made what the world calls a *mésalliance*; that is to say, he had married an elegant, refined, and beautiful woman—possessing, too, that nobler quality which the wisest among men declared to have a price above rubies, but who could not trace her descent beyond four generations, and whose only nobility was self-derived.

Of course it was a dreadful *mésalliance*; and after enjoying many years of happiness (only interrupted by the clamours of interested relations), the romantic lover had merged into the old married man, had encircled his brows with the hereditary coronet, and discovered that he had made a very imprudent marriage; moreover, the Marquis of Dryburgh resolved that neither of his sons should make a similar *faux pas*.

The beautiful Marchioness was a French-woman; not one of the gay flutterers of Paris and *les Eaux*, but a southern French-woman, born and reared on the sunny coast of the Mediterranean. She was a true child of the soil, full of warm, generous passions, and of that brilliant imagination which characterises those of Greek origin. She had loved the stranger lord enthusiastically, regardless of his wealth and position; had he been obscure and poor she would have loved him just the same—she would have followed him just as readily, to the cold isle which the sun lights so grudgingly—even to colder regions.

When first Lady Dryburgh became aware that her husband regretted the sacrifice he had made in marrying her, she did not reproach him, though every tender feeling of her sensitive nature was wounded to the quick. She only begged to be allowed to visit her own beautiful shore, and amid the familiar music of the southern waves, to await the birth of her second, perchance her youngest-born son. She looked pale and dejected. Her husband granted her request, and bidding her farewell, as if they were soon to meet again, suffered her to depart.

Amid old familiar scenes and cherished memories, the beautiful but broken-hearted woman brought forth her second son, and called him by his father's name, Claude. In writing to tell the Marquis of the event, she added—"It is a sad pleasure to me to think that my little Claude is born in his mother's land, and will be a Frenchman. Suffer him to be so, my Lord. If I am spared, let me rear him in my native land; let him be taught to express love, joy, hope, and fear in his mother's language, and with her native accent. His eldest brother will represent your dignity in England; let me have one son for a countryman. Think not that I undervalue your country (that it is such, is enough to make me love and venerate it), but hearts beat not there with the same warm, free pulse as in our sunny climate.

"For myself, I shall be happier here than in England. In the days of our early love and happiness, my Lord, all places were alike to me. Your smile made my heaven even beneath a cloudy sky; it would have made my heaven amid the horrors of a Siberian exile. But now—now that the world's pomps and the world's pride have taught you to

view the happy past as (at best) a folly, I cannot live in the atmosphere of chilled affections. I have no reproaches in my heart, Heaven is my witness; let me live on the remembrance of the Paradise that once was mine, and I will bless you still."

The Marquis, now a thorough man of the world and a busy politician, thought his wife a sentimental fool thus to renounce a brilliant position in England, but he acceded to her wishes without much difficulty. The world was informed that the Marchioness was obliged to live in the South, on account of her delicate health. Political affairs retained the Marquis constantly in England.

Years slipped away. When the period arrived at which the education of the little Claude must be thought of, the Marquis despatched an excellent tutor to take charge of his son, conjointly with the Marchioness. Claude acquired the language of his father's country with the facility usual in childhood. When he had attained his twelfth year, his mother gave him her blessing and died, and he was brought to England to join his stranger father, with feelings that hovered between interest, curiosity, and dismay, both

with regard to the unknown parent and the untried country.

The Marquis of Dryburgh soon discovered, with pride and exultation, that his youngest son had talents of a high order. Claude's education had been skilfully conducted, and he added to the charm of a vivid imagination, a particularly graceful facility of clothing his ideas in elegant and appropriate language. His father conceived brilliant hopes of his oratorical powers being one day successfully displayed on the grandest arena the world boasts, the British House of Commons.

Lord Claude's talents were accordingly to be cultivated so as to fit him for coming distinction ; but the Marquis (who had run through all finer feelings, as a spendthrift runs through his estate in early youth) died of family pride and a heart complaint, just before Lord Claude left college, and, of course, before his ambitious expectations could have a chance of fulfilment. At the time of Lord Claude Douglas's introduction to our readers, he had entered his thirtieth year ; and so far from having thrilled the senate with his eloquence, his voice had never there been heard, nor was he in the least degree distinguished in

public life ; indeed he had made no attempt to enter on its theatre.

He had spent years loitering amid the fallen glories of Greece and Italy—had travelled into the East and learnt Arabic—returned, and idly floated about the shores of his native Mediterranean. Shortly after, he had plunged into the depth of the Highlands, and charmed with the romantic beauties of the country, as well as with the generous, independent character of the mountaineers, had suddenly remembered, that through his father, he too belonged to the land of flood and mountain, and was as true-hearted a Scot as though he had talked Gaelic and worn the philibeg all his life. Lord Claude was good-looking and accomplished in the best sense of the word ; a man of fashion, too, without being a slave to the world's customs or vices. Wherever he came, he was

“The observed of all observers.”

Generous to excess, frank, young in all his feelings, he had the graceful *abandon* of a polished Frenchman so finely mingled with the dignity of a British nobleman that society proclaimed him the most charming of men.

Lord Claude had a passion for poetry, and

read and recited with such thrilling effect that he could at pleasure produce tears and smiles in his auditory. His many years of wandering had made him well acquainted with the poetry of the lands he had traversed, and he was as familiar with Dante as with Shakspeare.

With all his advantages, natural and acquired, he was not vain; and though a Frenchman, and professedly a devotee of the beautiful, Lord Claude not only remained unmarried, but had never been known to offer any attentions approaching gallantry to the beauties who distinguished him by their favours. Some one told a story, or rather hinted, that he had loved a young Greek girl of exquisite beauty some years previously, and that the difference in their social position had rendered his passion unhappy; but no one who witnessed the brilliant animation which often lit Claude Douglas's expressive face could believe him the victim of hopeless love. Still he remained unwon, much to the grief of several gentle hearts, and greatly to the disappointment of a host of mothers and aunts, who had given strict orders to their daughters to fall head-over-ears in love with Lord Claude, whose

paternal uncle had left him a brilliant fortune, which made him, in fact, a much better match than his elder brother, who enjoyed the title. The injunctions of mothers and aunts were in some instances too faithfully obeyed. But in vain did dowagers plan and beauties sigh. Lord Claude was fastidious; the woman who could win his heart had not yet appeared, unless in the brilliant sphere of his own sunny imagination. Therein he had depicted the lady of his love, fairer than "the one fair spirit" the poet sighed for as his minister, endowed with the genius of Corinne, the tenderness of Lear's youngest daughter, and the passionate heart of Juliet, tempered by the innocent modesty of "the most unfortunate of ladies, who sucked the honied music" of young Hamlet's vows.

Thus had Claude dreamed, and vainly had he sought the realization of these dreams among the aristocratic beauties who flitted through the maze of fashion—as vainly had he sought in other spheres for the incarnation of his ideal. At thirty years of age, though young as ever in heart and fancy, he began to think that he would have been wiser to study politics, as the end and aim

of life, than to dream over the creations of poets, painters, and sculptors, till they had taught him to demand of actual life what actual life could never give—the impossible. Still Claude Douglas was of too bright and joyous a nature to rank among the disappointed, and wherever he came he seemed to bring with him “nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,” and to create an atmosphere of joy, which he could instantly, as if by magic, change to the most serious interest, by a quotation, given with the pathos of one who feels in his inmost soul the beautiful thought, which he pronounces in the most moving and exquisite of voices.

Every one loved or admired Claude Douglas, and his friends were such who would have continued so still, had he been shorn of all his worldly advantages. His servants adored a master whose commands were issued in the gentle tone of requests, and who watched faithfully over the welfare of his humblest follower.

CHAPTER XV.

It must not be supposed that Annie had lost sight of her friends all this time. She was still enjoying the benefit of the amiable Julie's lessons—still occasionally receiving a visit from Bertha; and when released from her rather strict confinement at Mr. Curzon's, she took the opportunity of going to see Mrs. Harrington. Those visits, however, became fewer, and farther between.

It happened one day that she met Mr. Harrington. At first haughty and repulsive (in remembering her position), he gradually became attracted and interested by her conversation; and as he was a man without any refinement of feeling, he showed the pleasure he felt in her society by such marked attentions, that Annie was rather offended than gratified.

Mrs. Harrington grew uneasy, and Annie read her thoughts. "This will not happen again," said she, mentally; "he is so seldom home, I am not likely to meet him for a long

time, and if I should, to-night's whim will be forgotten." But it was not so. On her next visit Bertha told her that Mr. Harrington had been much more at home lately ; and Annie was chagrined to hear him say,—

"Are you going to stay, Miss Sherwood? If you are, I shall not go out."

"No," replied Annie, quickly, "I must return to G—— Square almost directly ; my pupils will expect me ; a governess must be at her post." She spoke thus, intending to recall to Mr. Harrington's mind that she was only his wife's very humble acquaintance—an acquaintance in fact, with whose vulgarity he had once reproached her.

"I will set you down at Mr. Curzon's," said Mr. Harrington.

"Impossible ; thank you," replied Annie, with an instinctive feeling that she would rather not look at Mrs. Harrington ; "it would be *as much as my place is worth* to return under the escort of a gentleman. Besides, Mr. Harrington, a person holding your position in society, could not be seen with a mere governess without losing caste !" So saying, she hurried off, scarcely waiting to pay a hurried adieu to Mrs. Harrington, who faintly expressed a hope that she would come again.

"Ah! pray do," said Mr. Harrington; "if I did not dread your reproof I should quote Jessica's words,—‘Our house is—’ You know the rest; but truly, your lively presence brings a sunshine to these dim, melancholy walls to which they are little accustomed."

"A very charming woman," repeated Mr. Harrington, after having gallantly attended Annie down stairs. "A very charming woman. I wish you would have her with you often, Carry. Far too good for her trade. A pity to see a woman like that degraded to such low drudgery! By the way, Carry, why didn't you take her yourself? But I suppose it was your——jealousy."

Mrs. Harrington made no reply but the long deep-drawn sigh of the broken-hearted. She did not remind her husband (as many a wife so circumstanced would have done) of his coarse attack on her for her intimacy with the very woman he now thought so charming. Perhaps he would have been startled if his own words had been repeated to him. "Really good-looking, too!" he continued, after a slight pause, "though it does not strike one at first. Fine eyes! magnificent hair! The only little woman I

ever saw who could look dignified. You must ask her next week, Carry."

Mrs. Harrington obeyed. She was in the habit of obeying; but she found that Annie had as many engagements as a lady of the highest fashion, and could not spare a single evening.

The letters of Ellen formed the great charm of Annie's existence; they brought sunshine to her gloomiest minutes. Not only did they tell of the young wife's happiness, but they breathed such a spirit of undiminished sisterly affection, and such assurances of brotherly good-will from Richard, that Annie felt she had a haven of rest in their pleasant home, whenever she felt the world's rough edges too harshly. Not that she contemplated flying to that refuge; but still it was pleasant to know that such existed for her, and that she was not quite alone in a cold unfeeling world.

Annie's pupils continued to progress. Sydney, whose intelligence was rare, especially repaid the care bestowed on his mental cultivation; his mind was made to appreciate Annie's, though his heart could not understand her heart. It was a source of great grief to her, that the young creatures

with whom she was so intimately associated—taking, indeed, their mother's place to them—were drawn no nearer towards her after the lapse of months, than when she had come among them as a stranger. Their worldly parents she had almost ceased to notice ; but the heartless system on which they acted had the most unfortunate effect on her. The chilling atmosphere in which she lived seemed to have encrusted her so completely, that though she never gave way to anger or impatience, and sedulously discharged her duties, she had grown as cold, and apparently as heartless, as those around her. One kindly word or look would have dissolved the spell ; but who was there in that grand, stately mansion to offer either to the lonely governess ?

Once or twice Annie met Dr. Sinclair. He made many kind inquiries after her welfare, and seemed anxious to know how she was situated.

"I have no right to complain," Annie answered. "My salary is regularly paid ; no one interferes with me ; my pupils improve, and I have taught them to respect and obey me."

"All that may be," said the Doctor,

shaking his head, "but you are not happy—you know you're not. Your face tells more truth than your lips. You're in bad health, too."

"Indeed I am perfectly well."

"You are nothing of the kind. I'll tell you what you must do, if you've taken such a fancy to those amiable people that you can't live without them."

"What must I do?" asked Annie, who was highly amused at her supposed attachment to the Curzons.

"Make Madam Juno give you a holiday, and go down to the Stancliffs. You have been with that angel a year?"

"Nearly."

"Then of course you must have a holiday."

"I will see about it."

"See about it! Nonsense! If you don't directly demand time for a rest, I shall call on Lady Adelaide and order country air for you. What would you say to that?"

"I fear your powers would fail. I know of nothing that would influence Lady Adelaide (if she did not choose to be influenced) short of a command from the throne itself. She has a particular dislike to the routine of her household being interrupted; otherwise,

I think she would long ago have replaced me. I am too independent to be a favourite. I don't think she will give me any holidays. But if you think it really necessary that I should have a rest, I shall of course ask for a little time. I do long to see Ellen and her baby."

"What baby?"

"Did I not tell you I was an aunt?" exclaimed Annie, with such proud delight, that she seemed to think no one had ever been so distinguished before, and that aunt-hood was a very good thing. With all the worldliness she was daily acquiring, Annie sometimes showed a trait of simplicity which did honour to her early training.

There then followed a great many half-muttered exclamations from the Doctor about poor parsons, and large families, and the imprudence of early marriages, &c., while all the while he was mentally revolving the expediency of sending the new-comer a little token of his good-will. Of course the infant prodigy would appreciate the said little token, and it would assist the young parents to meet the additional expense entailed on them by the consumer of pap. "Remember," said the Doctor, as he

bid Annie good-bye, "you'll get a holiday, or I shall for you!" and he rushed away, delivering to himself his opinion of Annie Sherwood (as often as he had already informed himself on the subject), as well as that which he supposed her to entertain of him. And while he thus thought aloud, Annie went on her way with a brighter face, pondering what a pleasant world this would be, if it held a great many golden hearts like the dear old Doctor's, or even a sprinkling of them.

Pursuant to Dr. Sinclair's advice, Annie requested an interview with Lady Adelaide, and stated her wish to have a holiday. "I cannot spare you," was the curt reply. But Annie, who had now thoroughly persuaded herself that she must see her sister, and her sister's prodigy, persevered in her demand, and, being full of the home topic, forgot herself so far as to speak pleadingly on the subject, and even momentarily to expose her feelings before the proud lady, talking earnestly of the love that bound Ellen and herself together, and of her anxious wish to look on the face of Ellen's first-born. In the midst of her eloquent appeal, Annie looked up at the beautiful Lady Adelaide, and saw a smile of scorn on her lips. An angry

flush passed over the pale face of the speaker, that she should thus have displayed her most sacred feelings to a worldling.

"I tell you it is impossible, Miss Sherwood," said Lady Adelaide; "in a fortnight we leave London for the Continent."

Annie started.

"Leave London!" she repeated; "leave England without seeing my sister! Oh no! I cannot do that—indeed I cannot."

"As you please," said her ladyship. "I suppose that, however valuable Miss Sherwood's services may be, on an emergency she could be replaced." And she turned away, to preclude any further conversation.

Annie retired to ponder over her situation. She felt inclined to leave the Curzons immediately; and while she was debating the point, she was joined by Sydney.

"Do you know that we are going abroad, Miss Sherwood?"

"I hear that you are going, Sydney."

"And you, too; of course we shall take you."

"But I am not sure that I shall agree to be taken."

"Not agree to be taken! You can't mean that? To leave us would be quite against

your own interests ; I am sure it would. I wouldn't consent to go without you."

"Ah, Sydney," said Annie, with an unwonted display of feeling, "if I thought that real affection made you so speak, it would reconcile me to much that is now painful."

"What a funny woman you are ! Do you think, when I go to see Franconi's troupe, that I have any 'real affection' for the horses or riders ? Certainly not ; and yet they delight me. When mamma takes me to a play, I have no 'real affection' for the actors ; but I can't bear not to see them. Now, I reckon you like one of the actors ; I could do without any one better than you. You must not think of leaving us—indeed you must not. I think you'd like to go abroad. Perhaps we shall go to Paris. You have never seen Paris ; it will give you new ideas. I know you will go. The only thing that worries me is about Lord Claude ; I don't like to leave him."

"You love Lord Claude, I think ?"

"Love him ! Well, I don't know ; I'm not sure ; he's a sort of hero to me, certainly. It was a great shame in you to stop my reading Carlyle's *Hero Worship*."

"You are too young for such a book."

"Miss Sherwood!" exclaimed the boy, suddenly changing the subject, "mamma can't bear Lord Claude; do you know why?"

"No; and I don't wish to hear."

"I think it is because he does not flatter her. All the other gentlemen tell her how beautiful she is, but he never does. Papa likes him though, very much. I only wish Lord Dryburgh would die—that I do, and then Lord Claude would be a Marquis; and then——" But here Sydney perceived that he had lost his listener, for Annie was buried in the contents of a letter, so he turned away with an impatient exclamation.

In the evening, Miss Dobson came into the school-room. She more frequently spent her evenings in the housekeeper's room—indeed, whenever she could slip into those favourite precincts without being observed. Miss Dobson was the spy of the house, as well as the toad-eater of its mistress; and it was on secret service that she approached the governess, whose conversation was to her peculiarly distasteful. She never willingly read anything. Lady Adelaide had increased her dislike to books, by imposing on her the task of reading aloud, not in moderation, but

many hours daily. She was a woman of the most narrow and uncultivated mind, and had no solace but fancy work.

Annie had a particular dislike to Miss Dobson, on account of her mean, parasitical character, but she pitied her. Indeed no one, however much they might despise her meanness, could help compassionating that poor, friendless dependent, who earned her bread by the hardest bondage ever imposed on humanity, or accepted by it—a bondage cemented by deceit and treachery.

When Miss Dobson visited Annie, it was to glean all she could, to carry to Lady Adelaide. She never told Annie anything; she was as prudent as Horace Walpole's man in the desert island, who, having one solitary companion, never confided anything to him but "how the wind blew, and that in a whisper, lest the wind should overhear." Miss Dobson had been desired by Lady Adelaide to learn (without seeming to inquire) whether Miss Sherwood meant to leave. Lady Adelaide was particularly anxious to retain Annie, feeling assured that she would find it difficult to secure a governess combining all the necessary qualifications with retired habits and a plain

person. Besides, her ladyship felt little inclined to fatigue herself with the examination of fresh candidates for the appointment.

Miss Dobson cautiously opened the business she had in hand. "I don't know whether you are aware that we are going abroad, Miss Sherwood."

"I have been told so," replied Annie.

"We shall be very gay in Paris," continued Miss Dobson. "It will make a great difference to you and me. Not that I am fond of pleasure, but at our age, it is natural to desire a little." (There was only a difference of twenty years between Miss Dobson and Annie Sherwood.) "Ah! yes, we shall be very gay in Paris."

"I am not sure I shall go," said Annie.

"Not go! Surely you would not relinquish the advantages you possess, in such a family as Lady Adelaide's!"

"I really do think I could dare as much."

"But what objection could you possibly have to going abroad?"

"None in the world. I am anxious to see France. I only object to leaving England without bidding my sister good-bye."

"Oh! if that is all, I really think I could

make interest with Lady Adelaide—yes, I'm sure I could."

"What to do?" asked Annie.

"To allow you to put some one in your place for a week (of course, *as the proposal would come from you, you must bear the expense*), and that would give you time for your little trip into the country, and enable you to accompany us."

Miss Dobson always said "us," when Lady Adelaide was not in the way to hear.

"Your suggestion is very good, Miss Dobson," said Annie (who knew all the time that it was Lady Adelaide's); "I shall act upon it."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN mid-winter, the Curzon family were located, not in the most charming of all cities, Paris, but its miniature, the elegant, aspiring, ambitious, theatrical capital of Belgium. The beautiful little city puts forth all its fascinations, great and small, to cheat one into the belief that they are in France—bright, sunny France—

“Gay, sportive land of mirth and social ease,
Pleased with thyself, who all the world can please.”

Annie Sherwood was internally sadly disappointed to have lost the sight of Paris; but of course she kept her disappointment quite to herself—it could be of no moment to any one else. Lady Adelaide was in a condescending humour, and informed Annie that Brussels was really very like Paris, only smaller. Annie looked without, and thought that Paris was then very insignificant.

The Curzons had put up at the Hotel de

L'—, immediately adjoining the royal residence. The Palace is unimposing; its plain, unadorned, and uniform frontage giving one an idea of an office for the transaction of business—a post-office, for instance—or a Corn-Exchange, or any place in which a great many accounts would be cast up, and a great deal of money received. Probably, however, neither ever occurred to an alarming extent in the royal dwelling of Leopold the First, by the nation's good will, King of the Belgians.

Opposite to the Hotel de L'— was the comparatively small enclosure denominated the Park, with its avenues of leafless trees, its little fountain, with a little ice at the bottom, and here and there a bundle of straw, standing (as sailors would say) on its beam-ends. Strangers were told that the aforesaid bundles of straw eclipsed the glory of some exquisite statues. If the strangers had faith as a grain of sand, they believed what was told them; if not, they persisted in thinking that the straw-bundles were straw-bundles, and nothing more.

Every one who knows Brussels (and that is every one who is any one) knows, too, what a dismal impression is made on the


stranger who arrives there in December, when the sky and atmosphere rival the far-famed murky reputation borne by those of England. Yes, he will remember it well, especially if he has been cheated into the belief that he was coming to another Paris! Paris could never look dull and melancholy, if it tried ever so hard—how should it?

Our solitary heroine thought—but no matter what she thought!—she was very sad, after the happiest month she had ever known in her life—a month spent as if in Paradise!—and bright, sunny faces were still flitting before her eyes—sweet, loving voices still murmuring in her ears, but only like dreams—she could not realize them. She took up a book—the only one she had unpacked—but the type seemed upside down. She closed the volume and looked round the lonely little room, as if for some one to talk to. Then Annie took a pencil, and wrote some very bad verses on the back of an old letter, finally burst into tears, and cried, till she looked much plainer than nature had made her. Foolish girl! she had never learnt crochet!

For “want of other idleness,” Annie invested two whole francs (a great sum to

her) in the purchase of the much-reviled, but invariably patronized article—a guide-book. From that she learnt that a great deal more was to be seen in Brussels than the mimic fountain, the straw-bundles, &c., and she actually made some silly speech at luncheon, about liking to see interesting localities. Lady Adelaide quickly put these ambitious views to flight, by giving her to understand that a passion for sight-seeing was indicative of a low origin. Of course nothing more was said on the subject. Lady Adelaide had pronounced quite enough to convince any right-minded person that seeing old cathedrals, &c., was quite a plebeian proceeding; but then, Annie Sherwood was not right-minded. Miss Dobson was of course more open to the reception of proper impressions. She did not wish to see anything like “those nasty, cold, grey, old places, only fit for bats to live in; it gave her cold to look at the outside of them only!”

Strange things were taking place in the Curzon family. Mr. Curzon was making another attempt to become more domesticated. The House was not in session; the clubs were deserted, the town empty.



Moreover, he had by some means lately outrun his income; he must retrench for a year or two—abroad, of course: great people can't retrench at home; they never attempt it. Little debtors and little spendthrifts flock to Boulogne; great defaulters and ruined men choose Brussels. The first class lose their characters, the second are only men of fashion. To be in debt a few hundreds, shows shocking depravity; to owe sixty or eighty thousand pounds, is to evince high breeding. The two sets of debtors, however, must never be compared: such a comparison is as odious as one between Dick Turpin and Napoleon, the Robber and Alexander.

Mr. Curzon was trying in earnest to cultivate his family. Once more he condescended to examine into the progress of school-room affairs, was satisfied, and expressed his satisfaction in as gracious a speech as he could frame his aristocratic lips to utter. The governess did not seem as overwhelmed with the honour and favour of his approval as a right-minded person ought to have been; and while resolving to continue to use her services as a very useful drudge, Mr. Curzon applauded his own discernment in having

long ago discovered Miss Sherwood to be a very disagreeable person indeed.

Mr. Curzon, though a "member of the late Ministry," and though "an able speaker in the House," had some of the weaknesses of humanity, in common with less distinguished individuals: he was a vain man. Eminently handsome, he was quite aware of his personal advantages, and rather resented the fact that one of his pretensions, mental and personal, should converse for ten minutes with a female dependent, without her evincing the least pleasure in his society. And Miss Sherwood plainly showed by her countenance, however much she might endeavour to suppress the evidence in her manner, that she would feel immensely relieved by the distinguished Mr. Curzon finishing his patronizing harangue and withdrawing from her presence.

After a month or two, Mr. Curzon and Lady Adelaide selected a handsome house in the Rue Du —, which, though not quite so outwardly splendid as they could have wished, was inwardly decorated with art, which only wanted solidity, to merit the name of magnificence.

About the same time, the severity of the

winter became great. The ground was white with frost and snow, the mists were dispersed, and the Brussels world of fashion rushed with enthusiasm to the delightful diversion of sledging.

CHAPTER XVII.

MERRY musical little bells those were, tinkling through the frosty air, as the jaunty sledges, gaily painted and gilded, glided smoothly and swiftly along. All the horses looked so spirited and proud, tossing their heads high, and displaying the strings of silver bells with which their necks were adorned. They wore the daintiest harness that could be devised, and some of them crimson or blue trappings, that floated in the air something in the guise of the scarfs wherewith, in the olden times, ladies were accustomed to deck their favourite knights.

The exquisites in the sledges were trying hard, very hard, to look like Frenchmen; but fruitlessly; fashionable as was their array, there was still wanting that nameless something in their tournure which makes the high-bred Frenchman "the glass of fashion," even as the aristocratic Englishman is the "mould of form."

It was a rarely bright, even a sunny day,

though the cold was intense, and the whole line of the Boulevard was a sheet of dazzling snow. Annie Sherwood and her three pupils were walking on the broad path allotted to pedestrians. It was Sydney's good pleasure to see the show, otherwise Annie would have chosen a more retired spot.

Sledge after sledge passed by, each one more elaborately elegant than its predecessor. The promenade was crowded with admiring and admired ladies. All the Belges are little ; but they are generally good-looking. They have regular features, while ever and anon the recurrence of a deep, dark eye, and shining curls of jet, reminds one that Spanish blood has mingled with theirs. There is, however, a heaviness in the Belge countenance, of which they are doubtless conscious, when they affect Gallic vivacity.

Eastern women are said to carry their fortunes on their persons ; and even so—though she binds no string of coins (destined to become her dowry) among the braids of her hair—the Belgian beauty appears to invest a large part of her fortune in her toilette. It is literally sumptuous. She wears the richest furs and velvets, &c. ; while even for the promenade, her robe is

elaborately trimmed with lace flounces of the most costly make ; and her head adorned with the richest white satin bonnet, bearing a plumage of dazzling purity—this, even in winter !

The Belges are magnificent in dress, horses, equipages, and everything which belongs to public life. In the home-circle they are sparing even to parsimony, that their narrow incomes may be enabled to meet the expense of their outward luxury.

Every eye is turned towards the carriage-road. Some person of distinction approaches. The Royal Family ? No ; a Princess of Spain, with her husband and fair children. A Princess who has stooped from the *prestige* of royal splendour to unite herself to one who had nothing to offer in exchange for the sacrifice, but a heart. The Princess is not beautiful, but the romance of her history creates an interest in her, which is deeply but silently felt.

Not far behind the Infanta's sledge came one of peculiar elegance ; the front terminated with the head and antlers of a beautiful deer, while its skin served as an apron. The occupant of the sledge was wrapt in a rich fur coat, a black velvet cap

surmounted his handsome, animated face, and the mass of literally raven hair that fell round it. How beautiful that face was (and yet not regularly handsome), with its broad, proud brow, its finely-arched jetty eyebrows, and its large, lustrous, dark eyes, which said a thousand things—expressed every varied shade of meaning. The rest of the face was not remarkable; it was dark, but very pale, and contrasted with the little black silky moustache which shaded the upper lip, without concealing the row of ivory teeth beneath. “Un Anglais!” said some one—for every eye was attracted to the sledge-driver. “Non, non, c’est un Français, je vous dis,” replied another. “Il est militaire!”

The object of discussion suddenly leapt from the sledge, confiding his spirited, coal-black horse (whose neck was adorned with the daintiest ring of Spanish bells) to a servant, and eagerly advanced towards the promenaders. He was very tall, and had a mingled air of dignity and fashion. His figure looked like that of a man of thirty, while his bright, animated face made him appear considerably younger. “Lord Claude! Lord Claude!” exclaimed Sydney, impetuously rushing to meet him. “Miss Sherwood,

this is Lord Claude!" he cried, turning his head over his shoulder.

Annie stood still to await the boy's return. Sydney came back with his friend, who, taking off his cap with easy grace, bowed to Annie, as if he considered the boy's exclamation a sort of introduction. He did not speak to her, however.

The boys, delighted to meet Lord Claude, who was a great favourite with them, began all together to question him as to the cause of their unexpected meeting. He tried to satisfy them, but some minutes elapsed ere their vociferous questioning permitted them to understand the explanation given. "But, my dear boys, you must not keep Miss Sherwood standing in the cold!" said Lord Claude.

"Oh, never mind!" exclaimed Sydney; "she doesn't mind it at all! do you, Miss Sherwood?"

"Yes; I mind it very much!" said Annie, though the tone in which she spoke rather contradicted her words.

"I shall soon call, Sydney," said Lord Claude; then, once more bowing with an air of respectful gravity to Annie, he returned to his sledge.

"He bowed to *you*, Miss Sherwood! How strange!" said Sydney. "Did you see that Lord Claude bowed to *you*, though he knows you're a governess!"

Annie made no reply. She was deep in a fanciful reverie; such as, perchance, Miranda might have indulged in when she saw Ferdinand, than whom

"She did not wish to see a goodlier man."

It should not be reckoned as one of the *grievances*, but it is certainly one of the *griefs* of governess life, that the recluse existence to which the class are condemned, renders them peculiarly susceptible of romantic influence, and weaves for them many an airy dream which a little intercourse with the world would dispel. And perhaps our governess-heroine may be excused, if, in her many lonely hours, uncheered by the sympathy of a friend, and even unenlivened by the society of a common acquaintance, she thought oft and again of the distinguished-looking man, whose mental refinement and generous character were unmistakeably portrayed on one of the most charming countenances that nature ever produced. Perhaps she may be pardoned, too, if her dreams were of sledging, and of one sledge in particular, guided with

peculiar dexterity and grace ; and if a voice (which she had only heard uttering most common-place expressions) rang through her ears, even in sleep making sweet music ! Poor, foolish Annie, to forget that she was a governess !—a governess, and twenty-five years of age ! Yes, Annie Sherwood had reached the mature age of twenty-five, and had, till that period of life, escaped all the foolish entanglements of unmeaning love affairs ; but for that very reason, she was the more capable of romantic passion, when the

“ One bright particular star ”

appeared, who answered to her *beau-ideal* ; and so it happened, that Annie dreamt more, day and night, of the sledge-driver, than reason approved. Her dreams must have been very pleasant, for they lit her face with such radiance that she looked quite charming ; and they did yet worse, they lent such animation to her manner, that Lady Adelaide began to fear (after a few hints from Dobson) that the governess was becoming too familiar, and for that reason, and another of yet greater importance, she contemplated doing away with the one-o'clock dinner down stairs, and making the school-room party confine themselves en-

tirely to their own precincts. To this plan, unfortunately, Mr. Curzon objected. He had at length made the acquaintance of his children: he was struck with Sydney's unusually early-developed talents, was proud of him, and amused with the prattle of the younger ones. No; they were not again to be exiled to the school-room. He did not like quite to add, "Miss Sherwood might dine up-stairs," though he would not have been at all displeased had it been so arranged. Lady Adelaide did not meet with all the homage she expected in B——, and consequently began to experience *ennui*.

Incapable of any mental exertion herself, she would now, in her hours of weariness, have permitted the despised governess to amuse her; but then she might presume on the condescension and become familiar; and beside, if allowed to come into the drawing-room when her patroness was alone, she might have the temerity to expect the same indulgence on other occasions!

Lady Adelaide formed the acquaintance of a literary lady, with whom she became very intimate. The literary lady looked (I do not say she was) about fifty. She bore a strong resemblance to a speckled hen. She had

written two or three books, and talked a great deal about picture-galleries, and the styles of different masters (she had certainly never read *Peregrine Pickle*), and, estimating herself very highly, was fortunate enough to succeed in making a number of her friends and acquaintances accept the dogma of her being a very talented woman, without their taking any trouble to inquire into the matter for themselves. *Au reste*, Mrs. Bluington was amiable, and met Lady Adelaide's advances to intimacy with a very just estimate of her ladyship's position and pretensions, and with a most unfeigned admiration for the handsome and aristocratic Mr. Curzon; of course, Mrs. Bluington was a favourite with both.

Lady Adelaide was averse to exertion, and seldom visited her friend, but the literary lady constantly came to see her.

Mrs. Bluington had one weakness or peculiarity, excessive timidity! Though she had had the courage to rush into print, the courage to stand a broadside from the *Quarterly*, she was too young and timid to venture out alone! When she came to spend several hours with Lady Adelaide (which she often did in the long mornings), Mr.

Bluington brought her to the Rue Ducale : he called for her again at the expiration of her visit. Did anything prevent her husband's attendance, Mrs. Bluington was placed in the most painful dilemma. If Mr. Curzon were in the way, his escort of course was obtainable ; if not, the duty of conducting the timid lady home, devolved on Lady Adelaide's governess. At first Annie Sherwood felt indignant, and disposed to rebel against the absurd demand that she should chaperon a woman who might well have been her mother ; but then the ludicrous thought of protecting those elderly and doubtful charms so irresistibly amused her fancy, that she grew accustomed to the jest, and found her charge really good-natured and pleasant, when for a short time she consented to step from the pedestal on which imaginary literary distinction had placed her.

On one of the duenna walks, Annie met Mr. Curzon as she was returning.

"You have been re-conducting Mrs. Bluington, I suppose, Miss Sherwood?" said he, graciously.

"I have, Mr. Curzon," replied Annie, with an arch smile ; "but if I am to continue my office of duenna, I hope you will

appoint some responsible person to bring me home when my duty is performed?"

"Take one of the boys," said Mr. Curzon, who, for the first time, was really struck with the ludicrous farce so frequently enacted; and he too, would have smiled, but for the impropriety of being seen in familiar conversation with his dependent;—slightly nodding, he passed on.

Annie, rather ruffled by Mr. Curzon's manner, passed on too; and it so happened that she met the handsome sledgedriver who had been so much in her foolish thoughts lately. He was walking by the side of a beautiful girl, whose appearance denoted rank and wealth; but he took off his hat to Annie as he passed, and she, between confusion and pleased surprise that he should remember her at all, walked on hastily without returning the salutation, and thought that Sydney was not far wrong in his estimation of Lord Claude when he said, "I make him my hero."

And yet Claude Douglas had not the faultless beauty of the *héros de roman*. He possessed neither a Roman nose nor a Grecian outline; but the charm of his face was that which the boy had described—those eyes, like

jewels, through which a soul shone. Unmistakeable nobility was to be traced in every line of his face, in every motion of his elegant figure, even in the high-bred hand, which, like those of Sue's hero, might have made a woman jealous. But the most admirable point in Claude Douglas, was that apparent absence of self-consciousness: he always seemed pleased and occupied with those around him, always as if forgetful of his own existence. The influence which he unconsciously acquired, and almost as unconsciously exercised, among his friends and acquaintance, had not made him vain; he was too proud for the littleness of vanity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN the spring of the year, Mr. Curzon, leaving his family in Brussels (requesting his friend, Lord Claude Douglas, to take a general care of them, and to give his escort and protection to Lady Adelaide whenever required), departed for England, to watch over his own interests in a forthcoming general election. It appeared to him, however, a mere matter of form. He had represented B—— for many years, and had not the least doubt of being unanimously returned for his accustomed seat. The possibility of a contested election never occurred to him; and when, on his arrival in B——, he found that a Liberal candidate was already in the field, his aristocratic surprise was very considerable. His astonishment increased prodigiously when his former constituents, coming to the conclusion that his Toryism ran too high for the nineteenth century, actually returned his opponent! In a paroxysm of mortified vanity and patrician

disdain, Mr. Curzon cut the contumacious borough for ever, and rushed from the shores of his ungrateful country. Calmly (as he thought) reviewing his past career, it struck him that he had been a most disinterested patriot, from the first day of his sitting in Parliament; that no personal considerations had ever influenced his conduct, and that the interests of B—— had constantly pre-occupied his mind, even to the exclusion of family affairs and domestic affections. Finally, Mr. Curzon determined to thrust the matter from his mind, and consequently thought of little else.

“En songeant qu'il faut oublier, en s'en souvient.”

Alas! such was the case with the disappointed patriot. On his return to Brussels, Mr. Curzon was rather shy of English society for a short time; but at length, finding he was likely to be consumed by *ennui*, he gathered round him a circle of men as well born, but much poorer, than himself; of whom, if the equal in one sense, he became the patron in another,—they never contradicted Mr. Curzon!

Almost the only exception to this rule, was Lord Claude Douglas; who, having no motive for being parasitical, and being too

proud to be so if he had had a motive, often argued with Mr. Curzon certain points on which they disagreed.

It happened one day, at a dinner-party at Mr. Curzon's, that the two gentlemen were at issue on a certain point of great political interest. The discussion became animated. Something inspired Mr. Curzon with the desire to quote himself. He wished to bring forward a passage from some speech he had made in the previous session, but his memory proved treacherous.

It was dessert-time ; the boys were present. Sydney listened to the conversation, with the interest of one who knew that in coming years, his voice would probably be heard in the Senate. He remembered the interest that Miss Sherwood took in politics. He remembered, too, that she possessed a remarkably tenacious memory ; and he thought it just possible that she might have read and remembered the speech to which his father referred. He slipped out of the door, and flying up to the school-room, recalled the subject to her recollection, and asked if she could give the required clue.

"Yes," said Annie, and very soon produced from her desk the very identical speech

of Mr. Curzon's, cut from the columns of a newspaper.

Sydney flew off, and triumphantly produced the slip of paper at the dinner-table. The ladies had retired; the gentlemen were continuing their discussion.

"Dear me, the very speech!" exclaimed Mr. Curzon. "Where did you get it from, Sydney?"

"From Miss Sherwood; she has kept it a long time in her desk."

From that day Miss Sherwood ceased to be "a very disagreeable person" in Mr. Curzon's eyes. Probably the result would have been rather different had some one whispered in the honourable gentleman's ear that his cherished speech (it was a pet one, and he had taken great pains to con- it) had been preserved so carefully—not for its acute reasoning, not for its pure eloquence, but simply as a particularly good specimen of "that species of rhetoric called rigmorale!"

"Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as others see us,
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
An' foolish notion!"

Thenceforth Mr. Curzon became the de-

cided patron of the governess, though his patronage was mingled with becoming condescension, as a matter of course.

* * * *

Once upon a time a select party at Mr. Curzon's were on the high road to *ennui*. Lady Adelaide was the only musical lady present. In fact, very few ladies were present at all, musical or unmusical, at Lady Adelaide's *réunions*. Had there been, they might have withdrawn from her a portion of the homage which she always exacted from the opposite sex. Not that her ladyship ever flirted; she was no more guilty of flirtation than a statue of Lysippus would have been; and her virtue resulted from the source whence the propriety of the statue would have proceeded. No, Lady Adelaide never flirted.

Lady Adelaide had sung a number of scientific pieces in a magnificent voice and with great execution. Her singing surprised, but it affected no one. She had no feeling, and was not sufficiently an actress to assume any. She had played, besides, several "firework pieces of music," full of "chromatic scales like fire-rockets," as Cuthbert Bede, of venerable memory, would say;

but now the fireworks were over, conversation languished, and there was a general but unexpressed feeling that some fresh excitement was wanted—in fact, that it would be a “mercy” if some one would smash a lamp, or some one’s dress would catch fire, or some one would faint, or produce a sensation of any kind. This state of things produced a demand for musical reinforcements; but they were not to be obtained. Of the few ladies present, none were under fifty; and if they had sung, their singing days were over—the glory was departed from their voices.

The timid literary lady promenaded her hearers from the Dresden to the Dulwich gallery—from the Florentine to the Louvre. She discussed Titian’s colouring and Murillo’s grace; Michael Angelo’s grandeur and Salvator Rosa’s wildness, till some one in a corner (yawning behind the welcome shadow of a screen) started the subject of the Derby, as a relief to the *chiaro scuro*.

“Lady Adelaide, you are positively cruel to give us no more of your divine harmony!” said a young exquisite, who was remarkable for the exploit of running through a hundred thousand pounds before his lip had acquired the down preluding manhood. Perhaps,

though, as some one said of Dupin's calculations, there is a *zero de trop* in the story.

"Most *barbavous*," said a gentleman in the decline of life, who wished to pass for a youth, and thought that lisping would make him appear juvenile, "Most *barbavous*!—it quite *depresses* my *spinitis*!"

"Lady Adelaide!"—interposed an old Colonel, whose seventy winters had left him all the gallant air of a man of fashion, and, alas! the unmistakeable stamp of a *roué*—"if we poor mortals are no longer to hear the strains of St. Cecilia, indulge us with those of her humble follower. You have a *dame de compagnie*, I think; is she not musical?—if so, do let her appear. I am sure, if you do but tap the floor (like another Belinda) with your exquisite little slipper, your sylph-like satellite will appear. Of course she is sylph-like—everything attending you must catch a reflection of your elegance."

"What say you to that, my Lord?" said Lady Adelaide, turning to Claude Douglas.

"I say, Lady Adelaide, what Sir Andrew Ague-cheek said of Cesario, 'That youth's a rare courtier! rain odours, &c. I'll get them all ready!'"

"I did not mean the complimentary part of the Colonel's speech," said her ladyship, biting her lip with the slightest possible *air boudeur*; "I mean, about Dobson. You have seen her. Do you advise my having her summoned to give us some music?"

"I cannot advise anything which would be painful to your ladyship's feelings, as well as to those of the party concerned," said Claude, gravely. "To mortify must be as repugnant as to be mortified."

"Another Daniel!" said Lady Adelaide. "My Lord, you should have been the confidant of Solomon, or the bosom friend of Seneca."

Lord Claude bowed and smiled.

"Suppose we were to act charades," said the timid literary lady, or "unprotected female."

"Or get up an *improvisé* tableau," said Mr. Sackington Reynard. "Paris and the Goddesses. Lady Adelaide would make a magnificent Juno!"

"But there is no Paris!" said Lord Claude; and it was very unkind to say so, as Mr. Sackington Reynard thought himself at least equal to the fair shepherd of Mount Ida.

"A scene from the *Bride of Lammermuir*

would be enchanting," said the literary lady ; "I could personate Lucy Ashton, and you, my Lord, are the perfect type of the Master of Ravenswood."

"But there is one great obstacle to the plan," said his lordship, smiling ; "I am habitually too indolent to make love, even *en tableau*, however inspiring the object before me might be."

"You are a monster, Lord Claude !" said Lady Adelaide, with some meaning.

"I am 'indifferent honest,' your ladyship," said Lord Claude, looking very cool.

The *tableaux* fell to the ground,—the old Colonel returning to the charge with regard to the unfortunate Dobson.

Lady Adelaide, secretly more desirous of Lord Claude's good opinion than of any other person's, inasmuch as he never paid a *bond fide* compliment, determined to show him with what indifference she could brave his censure, and therefore gave the antiquated Adonis full permission to ring, and send a servant in her name, to summon the *dame de compagnie*, and when she arrived, to extract as much music from her as he could. No sooner said than done ; the summons was dispatched.

Lord Claude rose and walked away. He was chafed to think that the poor dependent should be summoned only to make sport for the goodly company; but as he could not prevent the frolic, he would retire from the immediate scene of action. The messenger had been gone about twenty minutes, when the door opened, and poor Miss Dobson sailed in (adorned with all the gaudy finery she could command, in honour of a *début* in the *salon* of her patroness), alternately giggling, blushing, and ogling the company. How pitiful it did look—that poor, yellow, wrinkled face! like a piece of discoloured parchment drawn over bones, while the head-dress with which she had attempted to decorate herself only made her appear more unsightly still. She stood near the door, poor mean, vulgar soul, awkward, not timid, and so proud of herself and her faded flowers and flounces, and of Lady Adelaide's favour! She had never ventured to hope for such an hour as that! The delight of the moment was worth twenty years of ordinary life; certainly it was!

As soon as Miss Dobson had recovered from the pleasant surprise of finding herself in the midst of a throng (to mingle with

which her highest flight of ambition had never led her to aspire), she took in the meaning of the petition made by several gentlemen grouped round her. She blushed, and, like Lady Heron, assured them that she "durst not play." How much in earnest she thought they all were! And some one spoke of Zuleika's beautiful description, quoting—

"The music breathing from her face!"

and poor little Dobson really thought they meant her. They asked her if she had read the *Bride of Abydos*? No; but she had read *Alinda, or the Mysterious Marriage*!

Quite half an hour elapsed before Miss Dobson succeeded in convincing the incredulous gallants who surrounded her, that she was neither a Pasta nor a female Thalberg; and even then, she allowed it to remain doubtful, whether modesty had not as much to do with her refusal to sing and play as want of skill or cultivation.

In the meanwhile, no one had thought of offering the poor little woman a chair. Mr. Curzon had passed her with a haughty glance, and "I'll trouble you to move, Miss Dobson." Mr. Curzon wanted a portfolio of engravings which lay upon a console behind

her, and the unfortunate parasite had started from her pleasant dream, and remembered who she was! When the haughty patron turned away, she tried to be as happy and sprightly as before; but it would not do, and she began to feel hot and tired, and to want to get to the housekeeper's room for that particular cup of tea that had been drawing when she came up stairs! Suddenly a voice exclaimed, in a tone of mock seriousness—"Room for the Master of Ravenswood!" and Lord Claude's tall figure breaking the group, he placed a chair for the unfortunate victim, saying, in his gentlest tone, "Will you not be seated?" Afterwards he brought her an ice; for the white-gloved footmen were carrying refreshments round, and carefully offering them to every one else.

Miss Dobson looked up doubtingly, but soon she discovered, that though he did not smile and talk exaggerated nonsense, Lord Claude meant to be kind, and even she understood something of the motives which influenced him; and, despite her blinding vanity, began to suspect that she had been mocked by the others, pitied by him! Gradually the gentlemen lounged away, having "used up" the fun; and then the little

woman had the satisfaction of finding that when she was left in that embarrassing situation—quite alone—Lord Claude again advanced, and drawing a chair near, tried to converse with her. Now and then he looked at Lady Adelaide, and though he might not have meant it, his look took the character of grave reproof, and seemed to say, “Have you a woman’s heart?” And when Lady Adelaide had read that look clearly, she said, loudly enough for the words to reach him—“No success with Miss Dobson, Colonel? I give you leave to try the governess! Discover, if you can, if there is any latent harmony in her composition!”

And again Lord Claude looked at Lady Adelaide, and again she spoke: “Do try your powers with Miss Sherwood, Colonel! Orpheus drew music from stones and rocks; you will be greater than Orpheus, if you extract music from her.”

The above amiable speech Miss Dobson most faithfully committed to memory for Annie Sherwood’s benefit; she had no concealments from her, when she could communicate anything disagreeable.

“Lady Adelaide!” began Lord Claude, in a tone of gentle expostulation; but her lady-

ship was in a very determined humour. "Lady Adelaide!" he repeated—"surely you will not ——"

"My Lord!" said Lady Adelaide, with hauteur; then, affecting playfulness, she added, "Surely you would not have Miss Sherwood's powers 'wasted on the desert air!' to use the worn-out quotation."

"So far from it," said Lord Claude, resolutely, "that, from Sydney's account of her, I have often felt surprised that your Ladyship had not been better acquainted with ——"

"Well, we'll have her down stairs, assuredly," said Lady Adelaide. "I am not sure but that she may be able to sing us some rustic ballads. She has lived much in the country, I believe."

"No, mamma; she can't sing," said Sydney, who, notwithstanding his usual acuteness, thought his mother was in earnest; "she can't sing, but she can do something better than singing. She can give you a Shakspearian reading, like Mrs. Kemble."

"What a good dodge!" exclaimed Mr. Sackington Reynard. "Let us have her down by all means!"

Lady Adelaide looked at Lord Claude.

"You are not going, my Lord?" said she, quickly.

"I fear I must," replied Claude, bowing as he passed by, but not so low as usual.

"No, no; you shall not go, my Lord," cried Sydney, detaining him by a vigorous exertion.

"What is this?" said Mr. Curzon, advancing.

"Miss Sherwood is coming down to read some scenes from Shakspeare, papa, and Lord Claude wants to go away, and I am determined he shan't! Do make him stay, papa."

And Claude was constrained to stay, whether he would or not. A message was despatched (by Sydney) to the governess. After using all his persuasive powers, the boy returned to say, "Mamma, she wont come!"

"Wont!" repeated Lady Adelaide, forgetful of her dignity. "She shall!"

"Tell, Miss Sherwood, that *I* request her to come down," said Mr. Curzon, with pompous dignity.

Sydney went up again, and presently returned, leading in the contumacious governess. Annie was plainly dressed in black

silk. The masses of her jetty hair were twined round her head somewhat in the fashion of a turban, and gave an additional paleness to her cheeks, shaded with lashes of unusual darkness.

Goaded by what she considered an unwarrantable exercise of authority, Annie had determined to yield to a request amounting, in fact, to a command; but in doing so, to evince that she considered her admission to Lady Adelaide's *salon* only such as a professional artist might command. She felt, too, perhaps, a proud consciousness that she could and would surpass what might be expected from her, and would leave no room, by elation or servility, for receiving insults like those which had been heaped on Miss Dobson. Sydney (while Annie was making a hasty preparation for her appearance in public) had informed her of the mock ovation which had greeted the companion's *entrée*.

When Annie Sherwood entered the drawing-room, she bowed to the circle, precisely as if she had been a hired performer, but noticed no one in particular.

"I will trouble you to place a table here," said she to a servant who was crossing the

room. "Thank you; candles on the table, if you please. Be so good as to give me a chair. Will you bring me a thick volume which lies on the school-room table?"

Then Annie seated herself, and, dropping the dark fringed lids over her expressive eyes, sat composedly awaiting the servant's return.

The book was brought; Mr. Curzon himself did Annie the honour of arranging the lights, which courtesy she acknowledged by a grave bow without looking towards him.

Then, with as much *sang froid* as "the sublime Fanny" could have shown on a similar occasion, Annie said, in a peculiarly clear, sweet voice, "I shall have the honour of reading to you Shakspeare's *Merchant of Venice*, *Dramatis Personæ*," &c.

No one spoke. Every eye turned on the reader. Lady Adelaide affected to yawn. She was sorry, very sorry, for her own act. She had brought down the "ugly governess" to show that she would, and also to enjoy her humiliation when assailed by ridicule. But now, now she feared that admiration would take the place of that ridicule. The play began. The voice alone of the reader held every ear captive; but as she

warmed in her subject, as her expressive countenance became animated and reflected every shade of passion she sought to delineate, her audience became fascinated; they quite forgot her identity with the school-room drudge, so excluded from intercourse with her noble patrons, so carefully hidden from their guests, as though too unsightly an object to be seen. And Annie soon forgot of whom her audience consisted. Reading her triumph in every eye, she rose to a proud height in her declamation; it ceased to be such—she became identified with every character, grave or gay, which she assumed. The coldest heart thrilled in listening to her,—the very coldest, except that of the proud Adelaide. The fiercest passion of envy was awakened in her bosom. She—she envious of the plain little governess!—the fright!—the dowdy, who had been as a worm in her path! She, the matchless beauty, who looked down on her as the eagle might gaze from its eyrie on the nest of the lowly wren!

When fatigue made Annie pause between the parts of the play, the men gathered round her, as they had gathered round poor little Dobson; but this time they were in

earnest, quite in earnest, and Annie knew they were, but a half-disdainful smile curled her lips, and her only reply to their flattering compliments was a cold bow. The disdainful smile changed into one of radiant beauty when Claude Douglas approached and offered a few remarks which showed he had a just appreciation of the performance: indeed, his expressive face had sufficiently shown the intense interest with which he had drunk in every word.

Encouraged by her success, Annie began the second part, and proceeded with redoubled feeling and animation. She did not direct her speech, nor even her eyes, to the one particular shady corner; but she was conscious that a person was seated there, whose applause was worth that of all else in the room, and, to win that applause, she surpassed herself.

The play was over; Annie closed the book and looked up, her face still radiant with the words she had just uttered; but she caught a cold, cruel eye fixed on her, which soon recalled her to her senses, and reminded her "*who and what she was.*" Quickly recovering her self-possession, Annie bowed as at her entrance, and, amidst murmurs of ap-

plause, made her exit by a door which she felt, rather than knew, was held open for her by Lord Claude Douglas.

Annie walked with a firm step till out of sight; but when she reached her own precincts, fatigue and excitement overcoming her, she sank on a sofa and burst into tears. They were not tears of unmingled bitterness, nevertheless. True, she remembered Lady Adelaide's inexorable eye,—remembered, too, what it had promised her; but beside that eye, she recalled a glance so beautiful in its soul-breathing expression, so long bent on her in respectful admiration, in appreciating interest, that the gracious memory chased away the painful one, and Annie sank into a charmed reverie—a reverie which Titania might have envied, and from which she was only aroused by some one addressing her.

The light was imperfect, she could not at first distinguish her visitor: how great was Annie's surprise to find, by the tone, that it was none other than the aristocratic Mr. Curzon! Could it be? Was she awake, or dreaming? Mr. Curzon had come to inquire whether she were fatigued by her exertions, to express a hope that she had taken some refreshment after so much fatigue, and to

thank her for the delight she had given to his guests and himself!

What a silly dream that was! Annie Sherwood rubbed her eyes, looked up, and beheld she was alone!

CHAPTER XIX.

NOT many days after the previous "scene," as Lady Adelaide and her *dame de compagnie* designated Annie Sherwood's performance, her Ladyship took occasion to inform Mr. Curzon that she intended parting with the obnoxious governess.

"That must not be," said Mr. Curzon, very decidedly. "We could not replace Miss Sherwood; she understands the boys' characters perfectly; their progress is immense. Moreover, they like her. Since she came to us, there are no more riots in the school-room. I can't imagine what has made you conceive such a design, Adelaide! Certainly no fault in her; she is most conscientious in the discharge of her duties."

"I think she carries her independence to a height which reaches impertinence," said Lady Adelaide. "Her manner towards me is far from respectful."

"But she is scarcely ever in your presence."

"Excuse me, she always comes down at luncheon time."

"Yes, for half-an-hour. What does she say then?"

"Nothing: she never opens her lips; but her very silence is impertinent."

"Perhaps you never speak to her?"

"I don't consider myself obliged to exert my conversational powers for a person in her position," said her Ladyship, haughtily.

"You know that I did not mean to suppose such a thing," said Mr. Curzon. "But, of course, if you never speak to the poor girl——"

"Poor girl!" repeated Lady Adelaide, contemptuously. "She will never see thirty-five again!"

"Well, that is quite unimportant," said Mr. Curzon. "But I must beg of you (as you see so little of Miss Sherwood, and as her offences are of such a negative kind)—I must beg of you not to disturb the boys' studies for a mere whim!"

"Mr. Curzon!" said Adelaide.

"I am sorry if the word offends you, Adelaide."

"I should think your introduction of such a person as Miss Sherwood to the drawing-

room for a theatrical display quite a sufficient insult to me, Mr. Curzon, without the present addition !”

“ My introduction, Lady Adelaide !—you are dreaming ! You will next accuse me of having given your vile follower, Dobson, the *entrée* of the drawing-room. Was it not at your desire that Miss Sherwood came down the other evening ?”

“ No, at your entreaty.”

“ I think not,” said Mr. Curzon, rather softened, for he was flattered by the idea that his simple request had had more power than an absolute command. “ But you must allow that she made no attempt to enter into conversation with any one, and withdrew most modestly directly she had finished reading. She has certainly never shown the least desire to be on familiar terms with us.”

“ Familiar terms !” repeated Lady Adelaide. “ She would find it rather difficult to be on familiar terms with me !”

“ Assuredly she would,” said Mr. Curzon, smiling. “ But pray remember, Adelaide, that we must not think of making a change, or at least not till Sydney is fit for Harrow. He would rebel against any alteration in plans, I am sure he would.”

"Then I must beg of you, Mr. Curzon, to allow Miss Sherwood to confine herself to her actual duties; or, if she must rant for your pleasure, let it be in her own precincts, and for your edification alone. I give you a *carte blanche* to attend her rehearsals: you know, as I told you before, I am not a jealous wife."

Lady Adelaide prided herself on her policy; but she had shown herself very weak in the art. Thenceforth, Mr. Curzon thought of the governess as a very interesting victim, doubly interesting, inasmuch as he was now quite persuaded that she appreciated him! Yes, she did appreciate Mr. Curzon; but the result of her appreciation was something very like contempt for his understanding, though he had been a member of Parliament, an able speaker, and eke a minister of state!

Had Annie suspected the extent of Lady Adelaide's dislike to her, and her wish to get rid of one whom she had learnt to fear as a rival, she would immediately have given up her "preferment" in her Ladyship's family. As it was, she remained ignorant of the doom she had narrowly escaped, though perfectly conscious that she found no favour in

the eyes of her patroness. Still her present position was preferable to the actual persecution she had sometimes endured, and she resolved not to seek a change.

Mr. Curzon and Lady Adelaide had so long lived *à la mode*, that, after a last fruitless attempt on the husband's part to establish domestic arrangements on a rational, if not a natural footing, their paths again diverged, and each sought their separate diversions and pleasures. Mr. Curzon had never gambled; but now he turned, he scarcely knew why, to the billiard-table, while her Ladyship suddenly acquired a taste for cards, which only stopped short of becoming a passion because she *had* no passions! Mr. Curzon and Lady Adelaide frequently spent the evening in different mansions,—seldom appeared together in public, unless he attended her to the Opera, or to the English Ambassador's.

At the E—— all the English in Brussels occasionally appeared, though they invariably grumbled at the entertainment of their noble host. It was affirmed that at one of the rare dinner parties at Lord ——'s, a tureen placed on the table was found to contain nothing more delectable than cobwebs! Brussels, however, is the favourite soil for

scandal of all sorts, whether it affects the *modest* reputation of a grisette, or the *hospitable* reputation of an ambassador.

Despite billiards, Mr. Curzon, divorced from his wonted patriotic labours, found time hang heavily on his hands. To the vexation and annoyance of Annie (who, of course, could not venture to protest against his visits), he came day after day into the school-room, to witness the studies and urge them on. He was full of condescension and encouragement. Annie dreaded his tiresome commendations far more than she had feared his former criticisms; oft and again a sigh of relief escaped from her when he withdrew.

Annie was never more called on for a Shakspearian reading in the drawing-room; but she often read a play for the children's entertainment, and grew as animated with that scanty audience as though her hearers had been numerous. Sometimes Mr. Curzon would drop in at such a time, then the reader closed the book; often, however, he pressed her to continue, in a tone of such patronising tranquillity, mingled with condescending compliments, that the request must be interpreted as a command. Glad and happy was the governess when the door

closed behind her patron, and she was left alone to pursue her vagrant fancies in composition, or to talk with Sydney. Not that the conversation of Sydney was all it ought to have been ;—it did not always fall on his books and studies, nor did it always consist of sage remarks ; for often, very often, his theme was his friend Lord Claude ; and foolish Annie, though she said nothing, always let him go on unchecked—there was one subject that never tired her !

Annie went out with her charges one bright spring morning, and Sydney, who was walking by her side, repeated the compliments Lord Claude had paid her performance. The repetition of his encomiums was of course checked ; but very gently indeed, and the listener was not at all displeased with his Lordship for his praises, nor with the child for re-echoing them. It was, as we have said, a very bright spring day, which perhaps accounted for Annie Sherwood's very recent discovery that Brussels was a beautiful city, and that the previously despised enclosure of the Park was the perfection of a public promenade. The trees were now clothed in their freshest robes, their branches were gently swayed by the most musical of

breezes, and the lofty avenues looked at once graceful and majestic, where bright flowers sprang up every here and there, and perfumed the atmosphere. The bundles of straw had disappeared, and in their places stood some white marble statues of great beauty,—especially beautiful was a Diana. The fountain, too, had burst from its long sleep, and in its waters sported a multitude of gold-fish, which some gaily-dressed children were feeding. There was a tolerably good musical performance taking place in a kind of rotunda, raised in the middle of the Park, and inscribed with the names of eminent composers. The rotunda wore the air of a temple dedicated to genius.

From one of the Park entrances is seen a noble view of the magnificent "Place," with its fine equestrian statue of the great Crusader, Godefroi de Bouillon. At that entrance, Annie and her pupils paused a moment in admiration; they then went down a slope into one of those pleasant shady *bas-fonds* in which the unfortunate Hollanders (in the Belgian Revolution) fought and fell like so many lions at bay: they were buried where they fell.

Seated on the turf, near a small fountain

(consecrated by the memory of Peter the Great), was a gentleman whom (although his back was turned) all the little party recognised.

"We were just talking of you, Lord Claude!" said Sydney. "I have been telling Miss Sherwood all you said about *The Merchant of Venice*, and about her!"

Lord Claude looked pleased with his own thoughts, or with the boy's *naïveté*, and taking one of the children's hands, immediately joined them in their promenade.

For a little time they walked on in silence, listening to the sweet strains from the rotunda as they came to them, softened by the slight distance. It was foolish, vain, weak-minded; but yet Annie Sherwood had not felt such happiness since the days of her childhood, as she experienced that hour walking beside the acquaintance of a day. What right had she so to feel! Assuredly none; and there was no one at hand to remind her of her now forgotten position—no one to point out the gulf which rank and fortune had placed between the daughter of a poor, obscure, country vicar, and the high-born heir to splendid titles and princely fortunes! Perhaps it was well there was none to awaken

her from her dream, it was such a pleasant one—she would have so few such through life. At a pause in the music, Lord Claude began to talk, in a voice sweeter than the music which had preceded it, and told Annie the story of all the interesting spots in the fair city. He told her to go and walk some twilight hour in the grand old cathedral, and watch the effect of the dying day on the rich tombs, as it streamed through the gorgeous coloured glass of the windows. He told her to look, too, at the exquisite sculpture of Verbruggen, which forms the pulpit, or rather supports it. 'Tis the first father of men, with his fair partner in sin and sorrow, drooping under the oppressive sense of unaccustomed guilt, and driven forth from Paradise ; but their hands are tightly clasped, as though love must be to them in future, instead of the Eden they had lost. Death, the newly-created enemy, hovers over, to remind them that their love is to be an ephemera like their existence. Then Claude repeated "De Musset's" lines—

"Oui, les premiers baisers—oui, les premiers serments,
Que deux êtres mortels échangeèrent sur terre,
Ce fut au pied d'un arbre effeuillé par les vents
Sur un roc en poussière.

"Ils prirent à témoin de leur joie éphémère
Un ciel toujours voilé qui change à tout moment,
Et des astres sans nom, que leur propre lumière
Dévore incessamment.

"Tout mourait autour d'eux, l'oiseau dans le feuillage,
La fleur entre leurs mains, l'insecte sous leurs pieds,
La source desséchée où vacillait l'image
De leurs traits oubliés ;

"Et sur tous ces débris joignant leurs mains d'argile,
Etourdis des éclairs d'un instant de plaisir,
Ils croyaient échapper——"


This melancholy picture awoke Annie from her pleasant dream ; but her new acquaintance, passing rapidly from grave to gay, drew such lively satires of the Belges and their miniature court, that the tears which had gathered in Annie Sherwood's eyes were chased away by smiles.

The little party returned to the more public promenade. It was almost entirely filled by crowds of fashionables, dressed in the liveliest colours they could assume without o'erstepping the bounds of taste. Here and there might be seen a bourgeoisie, wearing a black silk mantle over her head—a remnant and remembrance of the graceful Spanish mantilla, that looks at once "both mystical and gay." Among the crowd walked two fair youths, with gentle, modest

demeanours, bowing low every now and then, in acknowledgment of the respectful homage they received. The elder bore an unmistakeable likeness to his royal father—once an eminently handsome man—the younger, to a regal but exiled ancestor. Altogether there was far less of state and conscious position about those two young and beautiful princes, than was affected by the footman of the Curzon family.

When mingling with the crowd of gaily-clad, smiling fashionables, with whom she had probably not one feeling in common, Annie felt depressed and solitary, barely conscious that her newly-found, fascinating acquaintance was still walking by her side, and occasionally addressing her in the most charming of all voices; but even that voice lost some of its music in a crowd.

How Annie started! What a vague pain went through her heart when Claude Douglas, disengaging his hand from that of the child with whom he was walking, bowed, and hastily turning away, joined a group of ladies he had just met in the avenue. He walked beside the youngest and fairest. She was beautiful, and had all the *entourage* of adornment to enhance her beauty, and all the



consciousness of loveliness to make her doubly charming. She was, moreover, a high-born lady—you could see that in the long arching neck, the straight nose, the dainty little foot. And how sweetly she smiled on Lord Claude Douglas! How plainly her eyes said, “I have singled you out in this throng—I have forgotten all others—I see but you!”

What right had that plain little governess, in a shabby brown merino dress, and a coarse straw bonnet, to look after the beautiful smiling lady, and to wish, even for a moment, that they might exchange places! Oh! the world is full of vain wishes and foolish aspirations! No wonder poor Annie had some. She was very lonely, very sad, as she turned from that scene in which she had no share, and began her solitary evening by reading over all Antonia’s old letters. It is so difficult to forget old loves and old friendships! So much more difficult if they have proved as the apples of Sodom, beautiful without, but within—ashes!

The letters had been all read and replaced in the desk, together with a lock of long dark hair, severed from Antonia’s head on the day when she had said, with all the

warmth of sincerity, "There is no scene of my future life in which you are not mingled; no plan, for days to come, in which you have not a part!" The wreck of such a friendship on the world's quicksands was enough to chill a heart's warmest pulses; it had all but broken Annie Sherwood's. "Cold words will break the fine heart, even as sharp frost will shiver the delicate crystal."

Annie was going up to her sleeping-room, there to deposit her treasures (for Antonia's letters were still treasures to her); she loved them, as she loved the writer, for the past. She passed Lady Adelaide's dressing-room. The door was open; her Ladyship sat before a cheval glass which reached the floor, and reflected the whole of her fair form, from the crown of golden hair (in which her maid was arranging jewels scarcely brighter), down to the aristocratic foot in the small white satin slipper. The dark stuff gown of the governess seemed to cast a shadow over the light silvery dress in which the beautiful woman was arrayed to appear in a *loge d'opéra*.

"Miss Sherwood," said her Ladyship. The governess stood still. "Come in." She entered. "I wish you to go to ——'s

Library, Montagne de la Cour, and to ask for the Vicomte de Bragelonne."

"To-morrow, Lady Adelaide?"

"No; this evening."

"Alone?"

"Yes; it is too late for the children to go out."

"May I desire one of the servants to go with me?"

"Certainly not, or they might do the errand. You don't require any protection."

Annie withdrew without making any reply, without once looking up. She would not raise her eyes to the proud beauty's triumphant smile, though she knew it was there. They were lighting the gas in the streets. It was twilight. Annie went forth as she was desired, executed her commission; but knowing the town imperfectly, she lost her way, and wandered on in uncertainty, till she stood in the midst of the old "Place," with its beautiful Hotel de Ville, so like a venerable church. In the twilight, one may look round the picturesque square, with its middle-age aspect, till we fancy ourselves back to the days of Froissart. Here the most august potentate of his age resigned the splendours of the purple, and laid down the

sceptre ere it had grown too heavy for enfeebled hands—greater in renouncing empire than others in attaining it. Here had perished the great-hearted patriots, Egmont and Horn; here the savage Alva had gloated over their heroically endured sufferings!

But a busy crowd of market people were clearing away the stands and stalls on which they had just displayed their wares, and jostling against Annie, roughly reminded her that she had stood too long gazing. So she went on with a quickened step, and at length regained her home—no, not her home, Mr. Curzon's house; and the footman stared as he let her in so late, and promised himself a joke with the housemaid, at the expense of the demure governess, who had been wandering out alone till nine o'clock at night!

The next evening, finding herself unexpectedly released from her charges at an unwontedly early hour, Annie ventured to steal out on her own account, and hastily walked towards the cathedral. A special service was celebrating; she took a convenient station, from which she could at once contemplate the effect of the setting sun on the gorgeous windows, and also examine the

piece of sculpture which Lord Claude had pointed out to her attention.

For some time Annie stood motionless, lulled into a pleasing sadness by the exquisite music which floated around her, as well as by the scene she witnessed.

"You are dreaming!" said a low, sweet voice close beside her, in French.

"Of Paradise!" answered Annie, as Claude, slightly bowing, passed on. She stood quite still, as if fearing to dissolve a spell; when at length she left the church, she involuntarily whispered, "*Et ce fut un rêve!*"

When Annie re-entered it was half-past seven, too late for a young woman to have been wandering out alone, even to enjoy an innocent, poetical dream; but then she had been just told that a governess needed no protection, and she had been so long treated as one quite divorced from youth, that she sometimes forgot what was suitable! Besides, she had for months acted as chaperon to the elderly charms of a lady of fifty!

And when Annie received a reprimand for her excursion to the cathedral, she did think her Ladyship rather inconsistent and unreasonable. She became more sensible than ever of Lady Adelaide's growing dislike to

her, and resolved to relinquish her post. She was now neither destitute nor friendless : she might withdraw if she chose ; she had not Ellen to think of, before she decided on giving up the many advantages she enjoyed in the very aristocratic family of Mr. Curzon. Yes, she would leave ; but not just yet. She had not seen any of the interesting things Lord Claude had told her she ought to see. She must see them ; she would stay a few months longer for that purpose, and also that she might improve her French ! Of course, Annie could have no other reason !

CHAPTER XX.

DESPITE Lady Adelaide's contemptuous manner to Annie, and the depreciating remarks in which she indulged whenever accident or design made her the subject of conversation, she had become an object of curiosity, if not of interest, to many of her Ladyship's aristocratic acquaintance. Several of them graciously determined to extend to her the honour and advantage of their notice, of course with the full conviction that she would be sensible of that honour and advantage, and ready gratefully to meet their advances on their own terms. They were all *gentlemen* !

One day Annie found a beautiful bouquet on her table. She contemplated it with unconcealed delight, for she had a silly fancy that those bright flowers were chosen and sent by the reigning hero of her imagination. To say that she was flattered by the gift, would be to say too little.

The boys watched her while she held the

flowers so caressingly, and their smiling tell-tale faces made her think she was betraying her thoughts. So, contenting herself with a stolen look now and then, she put the flowers in a vase and pursued her avocations. How much less dingy and sombre the school-books and slates looked that day! How bright the sky was! How many a sun-beam strayed in and lit up the lonely room! The children were less tiresome than usual, or they seemed so to her; Lady Adelaide's supercilious looks, and even her words at luncheon, had lost half their power to wound. The only thing really tiresome and vexatious that day, was Mr. Curzon's half-hour's prosing, about matters of which he understood little or nothing!

In the evening Mr. Curzon and Lady Adelaide went out in two separate directions. The boys spent that evening with Annie. Lord Claude was expected to peep in. He was going to a state ball at the Palace, and had promised Sydney to show himself to him first, in the Highland garb, which he intended to assume; for he was a true Scot, and proud of being one.

"You wont let Lord Claude come up here, Miss Sherwood, I suppose?" said Sydney,

well remembering the unsuccessful efforts made by several gentlemen, who thought themselves quite irresistible, to gain ingress to the regions over which Annie presided. "There he is! I hear the carriage stopping! Ah! I see by your face that you mean him to come up! You know he is not like the rest; don't you?"

Before Annie could make any reply, the boy was bounding over the staircase, vociferating, "Come up, Lord Claude! Come up to the school-room! Will you come?"

"Have I Miss Sherwood's permission?"

"Oh, yes! all's right!—she'll be very glad to see you."

And Annie was glad, though ashamed and confused that her feelings should be interpreted so plainly.

How grand he looked! that nobly-born man, with his tall, elegant figure, clad in the tartan of his clan, a tightly-fitting, black velvet-jacket, with massive silver ornaments, resplendent with cairn-gorms! How fine that face, shaded with raven locks, and lit by those lustrous, speaking eyes! It was at once a countenance of power and gentleness, proud yet tender, spirited yet yielding.

Lord Claude's salutation of Annie was at

once full of deference and cordiality. He was less animated than usual; but that was as if to assure her of his respect. He remained ten minutes or a quarter of an hour talking to her and the children; fortunately not longer, or Miss Dobson might have grown tired of kneeling outside the school-room door, alternately applying ear and eye to the keyhole.

"You have a beautiful bouquet," said Lord Claude to Annie, when, for the boys' edification, he had finished the separate histories of "philibeg," "sporrán," "dirk," "skian-dhu," &c. &c.

"Yes," said Annie, colouring, as if the flowers were stolen.

"I have seen it before," said Lord Claude, looking very hard at Annie, and seeming very serious.

"Have you, my Lord?" stammered she, quite conscious of the look that was bent on her, but entirely misinterpreting its meaning, and not daring to raise her own eyes.

"Yes, I have; but do you know what the bouquet says to you?"

"No, my Lord."

"Then you do not know the language of the flowers?"

"I know it very imperfectly."

"May I be your interpreter?"

"If you will be so obliging."

"Perhaps you already divine from whom it comes?"

Annie's only reply was the deep crimson which suffused her face and neck; for worlds she could not have spoken.

"It means," said Lord Claude, very slowly, "it means a declaration of love; so fervent, that if it were equally sincere and respectful, it would be worth a king's ransom." Then pointing to each separate flower, he gave a brief interpretation of its signification, all the while looking as serious as though he had been enlarging on the best interests of humanity. "The clock upbraids me!" said Lord Claude, starting, as he accidentally caught sight of the timepiece.

"With the waste of time!" said Annie, finishing the quotation.

"No," replied Claude; "with a lesser sin, the want of punctuality. I have an appointment at the Hotel de l'Europe before I proceed to the Palace. But to return to 'the theme,'—have you untied the ribbon which bound the bouquet?"

"No," said Annie, "I did not like to—I

mean, I have not." "Ah, certainly he must have sent them!" thought Annie; "how else could he know of the ribbon which tied the flowers together, and which the vase in which they were placed entirely concealed?"

"They will die if they continue so tightly bound," said Lord Claude; "you should loosen and give them fresh water; indeed you should cut the ends of the stems—at least, if you care for prolonging their brief life!"

"Assuredly I do, my Lord."

"They seem very precious to you?"

Annie gave no answer in words, but she looked very much as if they were precious indeed.

"Let me cut the gordian knot before I depart," said Claude. "Have I your leave?"

Before Annie could reply, he drew forth his skian-dhu.

"Do you know whence my weapon takes its name?" he asked.

"No, indeed, my Lord."

"It is called skian-dhu, or black-knife, because of the dark deeds it was wont to perpetrate in the so-called good old times," said Claude, as he cut most relentlessly

through several of the most beautiful flowers, utterly destroying them.

"Oh, my Lord, spare them! they are so beautiful!" exclaimed Annie, with more fervour than the occasion demanded, and stooping to pick up some of the severed petals.

"Forgive my spoliation," said Claude. "How wicked I have been, though! See, I have actually annihilated the most impassioned part of the message!" and, as he spoke, the skian-dhu passed through the rose-coloured ligature, and from the heart of the bouquet a little billet fell at Annie's feet. "I hope I have your forgiveness to bear with me!" said he, and bowing, withdrew ere Annie could reply, or recover from her surprise and vexation at finding herself, as she supposed, trifled with by the last man in the world from whom she could have expected a deliberate insult, and as an insult she could not help considering the billet so clandestinely conveyed.

But Annie's indignation was considerably heightened, when on opening her note, she found that it conveyed a high-flown but really insulting declaration from the old *roué* Colonel! She was angry with Lord Claude

angry with herself. She felt sure that she had betrayed a childish pleasure in the possession of the unfortunate bouquet, while supposing that it came from Claude; with him she was angry for witnessing her folly, and probably putting his own interpretation on it. But how did he know from whom it came? What could have inspired him with the design of mocking her credulity? How came it about that her mortification took place in his presence? The result of her annoyance was, that the pretty, pink-scented note was torn into as many pieces as it could produce, and the rare flowers shred petal from petal, as if Annie had been repeating over and over again, "*Il m'aime un peu, tendrement, constamment, pas du tout!*" in that pretty floral fortune-telling which romantic girls love so much. Poor Annie! how that day's gleam of brightness passed away! How she remembered a thousand little trifles of an annoying nature, which she had disdained to notice a few hours earlier! How bitter her tears were that night! How firm were her resolutions of leaving the Curzons, though she had not seen one-eighth part of the lions of Brussels, nor even caught a distant glimpse of the glorious

field on which the defeat of a stricken eagle, when soaring beyond the limits of humanity, had changed the face of the world. Lady Adelaide had been several times to Waterloo—had taken the children there; but it had never occurred to her to let the governess occupy the vacant seat, with the back to the horses; she would rather have given it to her maid!

The morning following her discomfiture, Annie and the boys met Lord Claude in the Park. He immediately joined them, and after the usual greeting, said—

“I am afraid I offended you yesterday evening, Miss Sherwood.”

“You did offend me, my Lord,” said Annie, deliberately.

“By destroying your bouquet?”

“No, my Lord, but by suffering me to receive it: as you appear to have been quite aware of the insult intended to be offered me—the deepest insult which could be offered to a woman in my unprotected situation.”

“Miss Sherwood, you astonish me!”

“Possibly, my Lord; it would astonish most of the great world in which you move, perhaps, to find that any person in my position has sufficient refinement to feel an insult, or enough spirit to resent it.”

"But, surely, you cannot believe me capable of——"

"I do suppose you, my Lord, capable of having, as you yourself remarked, seen that unfortunate bouquet in other hands than mine; and, from your observations and action, I perceived that you knew something of its contents."

"What then, Miss Sherwood?"

"What then, my Lord! It may be that my estimate of you was false; it may be that I have exaggerated the consideration due to a defenceless woman; but from you, my Lord—from you I should have expected that, instead of enjoying my surprise and embarrassment—instead of drawing from me childish expressions of pleasure (which never would have been uttered had I known from whence the odious gift came)—yes, however unreasonable, I should have expected that you would have offered a remonstrance to Colonel Annesley, or at least have warned me of the insult I was going to receive."

"And your expectations would have been perfectly just," said Claude, who had listened quite calmly, though with respectful attention; "but I assure you (on the word of an honour which has never been forfeited) that

though I certainly saw the Colonel choose the bouquet in the Passage St. Hubert, and saw him insert a billet in the centre, then carefully tie round it a piece of pink ribbon, I had no idea for whom it was destined. At least I made a very mistaken conjecture on the subject; for seeing him disappear immediately afterwards in a shop at the end of the Passage (which is equally famous for Scotch buns, and for two showy-looking Scotch girls), I really supposed it intended to propitiate one of them. Indeed, I did not give the affair a second thought, till, recognising the bouquet on your table, I must own I felt desirous to know whether you had found the billet. I acknowledge, too, that I was struck with your seeming delight in receiving the flowers, and——”

“The flowers, Lord Claude,” interrupted Sydney, who had caught the last words only. “Are you talking of Miss Sherwood’s bouquet?”

“I am, Sydney.”

“Well, then, I can tell you we were all nicely taken in by it—Miss Sherwood and all!”

“What do you mean?”

“Why, we all thought it was a present from you!”

"Me!" exclaimed Claude; while Annie looked very much as if she would be greatly relieved by a sudden earthquake which would swallow her up.

"Yes," said Sydney, "it was one of your servants brought them."

"One of my servants?"

"Yes, your German, Heinrich."

"If this be really so," exclaimed Claude, "he shall leave my service directly."

"Oh, not so, my Lord; not so, on my account, I beseech you," said Annie. "This affair has made me very wretched. I should be yet more so, were any one to suffer on my account."

"It must be so," said Claude, hurriedly; "it is the only reparation I can offer you. If the fellow has hired himself as the instrument of Colonel Annesley's baseness, he deserves punishment. And yet I am sorry for his disgrace. I always thought him honest before, and attached to me. He nursed me through a long illness at Manheim."

"This is his first offence, and it will very likely be his last, my Lord," pleaded Annie. "Pray, pray forgive him! I have made a foolish fuss about this affair. Do let it be forgotten!"

Not that Annie, though she thus spoke, ever would forget it—it had caused her too much humiliation—but she was well pleased with Lord Claude's explanation.


Before leaving her, he, with peculiar tact, succeeded in giving Annie so many things to think about, so many new thoughts to analyse, that she could not dwell as constantly on Colonel Annesley's offence as she otherwise would have done. The affair fortunately did not reach Lady Adelaide's ears in detail. The children were very little with their mother. When they were, they never climbed her knees, as other children would, to tell their mother all that had happened, and more than had happened! Miss Dobson's tale was imperfect, from the fact of her having been unable to apply both eye and ear to the keyhole at the same time. Lady Adelaide seldom made any direct inquiries (except of Dobson), lest she should fancy herself of too much importance.

A fortnight later, Lady Adelaide accidentally entered the school-room. She came there in quest of a History of France (her Ladyship was reading a novel of Dumas, and wanted to learn *who Henry the Great*

was. Probably other reasons might have brought her to regions with which she was so little acquainted.

A bouquet, at least as beautiful as Colonel Annesley's, was on the table. Lady Adelaide deliberately took it from the vase, and threw the crushed, broken flowers into the fire-place, remarking that the smell was unwholesome for the children. Annie neither moved nor spoke, but carefully closed the door after her Ladyship. Those were not Colonel Annesley's flowers; Annie had, however, some reason for valuing them. She knelt down before the fire-place, and gathering up the broken flowers, put them in a sheet of paper, and locked them in her desk, all the time as tearful as a child whose pet canary has died, and caused her "first grief."

Poor, foolish Annie! She knew that she was dreaming an idle dream, that would end in darkness. She knew that she was setting up an idol to worship, that would haply fall from the high altar whereon she had placed it, and crush her in its fall! But a woman in love for the first and last time, at an age when the heart clings to its choice with a tenacity of which earlier youth is incapable, seldom reasons, nor did she. She little, little



knew that when the proud scion of a noble house had first addressed her, he had been greatly prompted by the compassion of a generous nature : compassion for her lonely lot—her life of trial and oppression. She little knew that the first time of their meeting he had mentally decided that there could exist no danger to his heart, in showing sympathy for, and interest in, so *plain a* woman ! True, he soon felt drawn towards her by respect and admiration—soon realized the existence of real beauty in her, irrespective of mere form and colouring ; but Lord Claude was a man of the world, and he was not in love !

Annie did not wait to think whether he were or were not ; she had enough to do to watch over herself, lest one unguarded look or act should lead to the betrayal of her presumptuous secret. Presumptuous, indeed—and yet, who could blame the poor lonely girl for her foolish dream ? Shut from all society, excluded from all converse but that of books and her own thoughts, week after week, month after month went by, and not a human being crossed her path who addressed one word of sympathy or kindness to her excepting Claude Douglas, and accident

or fate threw him constantly in her path. Did she go out into the crowded promenade, his was the first smile that greeted her; did she lead the children to some quiet spot, he was there reading. Perhaps it was poetry he read; then he would lend her the volume, lining the passages which he thought the most striking or beautiful. She was sure to think of them as he thought.

Besides these apparently accidental *rencontres*, Sydney constantly drew Lord Claude into the school-room; once there, he seemed to forget time—certainly Annie forgot it! Sometimes Claude came in with Mr. Curzon, ostensibly to note the children's progress, but really because Annie's society had become necessary to him—he said her conversation was so varied, her reading so extensive, her taste so pure and true; yet her mind was so free from pedantry.

The day seemed long to Claude when he had not seen Annie—the society of his fashionable friends vapid and tiresome; but he was not in love—how could he be so with a plain little governess, dressed in brown merino? No, Claude was not in love!

As for Lady Adelaide, she looked on, and wondered with a contemptuous wonder. She

was prevented dismissing Annie by Mr. Curzon, so she could not abruptly get rid of her, but she could and did make her life very wretched—so wretched, that she would probably leave of herself. In this plan Lady Adelaide would have found full success, but that Annie was now chained to her bondage by stronger links than the deepest poverty ever wove.

Lady Adelaide did not understand her; she knew her pride, she knew her resolution, but she did not know her woman's heart. She did not know how long, how enduringly the poor oppressed governess would bear the daily torture of insults and sneers, rather than cease to hear the music of a loved voice, that made all discord harmony.

Mr. Curzon, happy, self-satisfied Mr. Curzon, the last man in the world who would have done a dishonourable thing advisedly, or thought an evil thought unless it were suggested to him, applauded himself for his management, considered that his children were profiting very much by Miss Sherwood's labours, scarcely less by the constant presence of Lord Claude, who so kindly gave up so much of his time to them, and had actually volunteered to direct Sydney's French studies.

It never occurred to him that Lord Claude was reading aloud, for Sydney's edification, French books which Sydney could not understand, and to which Sydney did not even pretend to listen. Mr. Curzon never noticed that André Chénier was sometimes exchanged for Petrarca, Lamartine and Victor Hugo for Goëthe.

When the tired governess seemed to have cast off her *manteau de plomb*, and looked radiantly happy, Mr. Curzon thought she was animated by gratitude for his condescending kindness, and applauded himself as the most just and liberal of employers. After all, it was a great pleasure to oneself to make poor dependents happy! Mr. Curzon almost wished he had tried the experiment before.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I NEED not be in a hurry to choose my wife!" remarked Sydney, with the *posé* air of a man who had spent a dozen seasons in the great world. "I shall only have to look round and fix wherever fancy leads me. Of course, however, I shall remember who I am. Ought I not to do so, Lord Claude?"

"Assuredly," said Lord Claude, smiling; "but really, Sydney, there seems very little danger of your forgetting who you are. I sometimes wish I could forget who I am."

"I can't think why you should, my Lord; if I were you, I should be too proud of myself to want to forget for a minute."

"But I am not the least proud of myself," said Claude, sighing; "and often wish I were any one else."

"For what would you exchange, my Lord?" asked Annie Sherwood, who was very much of Sydney's way of thinking.

"For what?" said Claude, starting. "Oh, for some poor, ambitious artist, battling his

way up to fame and distinction; for some aspiring soldier, cutting out a patent of real nobility for himself by his sword. To be born accidentally noble is, if one has any aspirations, a thorough weariness. To be distinguished accidentally, and lack real nobility, is next to the wretchedness of being a monarch by fate, and being such only in name. Do you remember, Miss Sherwood, the passage in 'Sardanapalus,' in which he wishes to share 'a cottage' with Myrrha 'on the Caucasus, and wear no crown but flowers?' "

"A very stupid wish, my Lord," said Sydney. "A crown is a very pretty bauble, whatever people may say."

"Most men must think it such," said Annie, "or why is it that so very few instances are recorded of those who have had strength of mind to refuse a throne?"

"Cromwell and Washington are a host in themselves," said Claude.

"Don't put those two names together," said Annie, warmly. "Cromwell only refused the crown more firmly to grasp kingly power; but the great, the Roman-hearted Washington desired neither power nor the emblem of power."

"True; I was irreverently mixing fine gold with alloy," said Claude. "But if, as you say, men have so rarely strength to resist a crown's temptation, we have little right to condemn usurpation."

"I think, my Lord, that we have a right to condemn usurpation, but none to be severe upon the usurper, when the strength of his temptation is considered. I have always thought Napoleon too harshly censured for accepting the vacant throne of the country he had rescued from anarchy—accepting it at a moment when his mind must have been equally dazzled by the applause of millions, and the light of his own genius. By-the-bye, did you not attend Lady Adelaide to Waterloo the other day?"

"To Waterloo, Miss Sherwood? Vous oubliez que je suis Français!"

"Indeed, indeed, I forgot," exclaimed Annie; "if I had remembered——"

"I was merely jesting," said Claude, laughing; "my interest is equally strong in both countries. I am proud of being a Briton, but France is very dear to me,—my heart clings to my mother's country. I often think how natural was the young King of Rome's exclamation, 'Moi aussi, je suis

Français!' Yes, I divide my affections between France and England. You know what De Belloi says—

*'Le ciel en miséricorde au reste de la terre,
Fit séparer la France, et l'Angleterre par la mer.'*

But how desultory our conversation is becoming! We want Fröbel here to square our ideas. He proposes teaching children mathematics from the cradle."

"I am glad Fröbel is not my tutor," said Sydney. "I hate mathematics!" Then, abruptly enough, the boy added, "Lord Claude, why don't you marry?"

"I can give you a very good reason for my old bachelorship, Sydney," said Claude, laughing; "I cannot make a choice which would please myself, and please the world at the same time."

"The world! I thought you cared nothing about the world. Are you not always laughing at me for thinking of rank and fashion, and those things?"

"True, Sydney; but we are all, whatever we may profess, more or less cowardly with regard to the opinions of a world we pretend to despise. But, may I ask, what has set your brain the task of speculating on your own marriage and mine?"

"Oh! nothing very particular, only I was wondering, as Lord Dryburgh has no sons, and you are the next heir, who would come after you. I wish you could adopt an heir, as they used to in old Rome!"

"Why, my boy?"

"Because then I hope you would choose me. I should make a very good Marquis of Dryburgh. I should, as papa would say, represent the family with dignity."

"Indeed! Well, so much for your speculations on one subject; now for your matrimonial prospects!"

"To tell you the truth, I have been playing at *la grace* every day for six weeks with Alicia Seymour; and I am beginning to wonder whether she will suppose I mean to pay her serious attentions! She is really a very pretty girl, but she would not be a match for me! What do you think, my Lord?"

"Think, Sydney! I think that you may continue to play at *la grace* with Alicia for seven or eight years to come without the least danger of your attentions being misconstrued; after that period they might be open to misconstruction!"

"Thank you, my Lord, for your advice,"

replied the boy, drawing himself up with an air of grave self-satisfaction. "I really should not like to break with her at present ! What should you do, my Lord, if you had been drawn in to paying attention to a person of an unsuitable rank to your own ?"

"Really, your mature speculations puzzle me, Sydney !" said Claude, with a heightened colour. "Miss Sherwood, you must pursue a very eccentric plan in this boy's education !"

"I do not claim the credit of forming Sydney's character, my Lord," said Annie ; "Lady Adelaide particularly pointed out to me that I was simply to furnish his head."

"And his heart ?"

"Is left to nature ; its spontaneous growth has never been interfered with, as far as I know."

"Of course not," said Sydney ; "to interfere with my natural bent would, indeed, be useless labour. I was born what I am !"

Lord Claude sighed and looked thoughtful ; Annie thought he looked sad. She had been much wiser not to have thought about him at all. She had much better have let her thoughts rest on the handsome little German master who daily attended her pupils, and

paid her compliments which meant nothing when translated, but sounded well in the language of Schiller; and while he paid her those compliments, expatiated on his own excellent qualities and talents. Yes, Annie would have done well not to ponder on the sweet sadness of Claude's face, for two long months passed ere she saw it again, and then——. But to speak *en règle*.

"How is he to-day?" asked Lady Adelaide, at luncheon one day.

"In a raging fever; quite delirious; doesn't know Heinrich. I hear that Dryburgh has been sent for," said Mr. Curzon.

"What is the matter, papa? Is Lord Claude ill?" exclaimed Sydney.

"Very ill, indeed," said Mr. Curzon. "I am afraid, dangerously so."

"How unfortunate!" cried Sydney; "he promised to take me sledging next winter. Dear me, how sorry I am!"

"Poor fellow!" said Mr. Curzon, with feeling; "it seems he caught this fever in a Quixotic expedition in search of one of his many objects of charity, in some wretched prison. But, Miss Sherwood, you are ill!"

"No, thank you, Mr. Curzon," said Annie, with a desperate effort, and continuing her

dinner, though each attempt to eat nearly choked her. "I am quite well."

But Lady Adelaide's lynx eye was not to be deceived, and, even while affecting to look another way, she was reading Annie's very soul. "I wonder how Amabel Dalrymple will bear this? it must be a great trial to her, poor girl."

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Curzon, with some surprise; "I did not know they were intimate."

"Dear me, did you not? There has been a most romantic attachment between Lord Claude and Amabel for years, though family affairs have hitherto prevented the *dénouement* desired by both parties. You know poor Lord Claude's sentimental turn which he derives from *la belle France*. I assure you he has often talked to me of Amabel, quite in the 'Pastor Fido' style."

"Ah, then, that is the secret of his continuing unmarried," said Mr. Curzon. "Miss Sherwood, pray take a glass of wine; let me pour it out for you, your hand is shaking. Are you often nervous? Then, if he recovers, Lady Adelaide, it will certainly be a match?"

"Oh, yes," said Lady Adelaide, "*un de ces beaux jours!* We shall have *l'Élixir*

d'Amore at the St. Hubert to-night; you'll go, Mr. Curzon?"

"I don't think it will be worth hearing."

"Oh, yes, it will. There's that pretty little pocket edition of Adonis, Calzolari; Claude Douglas mischievously calls him Calzolaio. You'll go, Mr. Curzon?"

"I shall think about it; but I really am not in spirits for the affair."

"Not in spirits! What is the matter?"

"I am thinking of poor Douglas!"

"Oh, yes, to be sure; I had quite forgotten him. I dare say he'll recover; and if he does not, you know it will all be for the best. A man of his romantic notions is not fit for the world. Besides, if he goes, it will force Dryburgh to marry, and will probably prove a good thing for my cousin Flora, who is determined to have him, or rather his title."

"You must excuse my agreeing with you as to its being a good thing should Lord Claude die," said Mr. Curzon; "a host of rare talents and generous passions would perish with him."

"Mr. Curzon, you talk as solemnly as 'The Ancient Mariner!' Miss Sherwood, let the children go out directly; later we shall

have showers. You can go to the Boulevard de Waterloo, and leave a note for me there."

Annie bowed her head in acquiescence, and withdrew. She went with languid steps to her room; but once there, burst into a passionate flood of tears, more vehement from their long-forced suppression. A few minutes passed; she remembered her orders, rose, and prepared to go out, though sobbing all the time like a broken-hearted child.

Annie was soon equipped, and was about to leave her room, but on opening her door found Miss Dobson posted thereat, in a crouching attitude, her face red as a peony. "Lady Adelaide sent me to see why you were not ready," she stammered, "and—and I have dropped something;" and Miss Dobson continued kneeling on the floor, as if in search of something she had dropped.

"Lost something! yes, I think you have," said Annie; "you have lost all self-respect, all good feeling, or you would not sell yourself to be a spy!"

"Miss Sherwood, what do you mean by your insinuations?" cried Miss Dobson, starting up.

"I mean that I despise and pity you!"

said Annie, looking steadily in Miss Dobson's face, as she passed her by.

"Depend on it, Lady Adelaide shall hear of this, Miss Sherwood! I shall conceal nothing from her!"

"Come, children!" said Annie, going down stairs, without taking any notice of the last remark. Miss Dobson went to report to Lady Adelaide what had occurred, and the governess walked out with her three pupils, taking the path indicated.

They were obliged to pass Lord Claude's house. Already, to the eye of anxious love, it bore a funereal appearance. Annie's eyes seemed fixed by fascination on that dwelling; in vain she strove to remove them.

"Poor Lord Claude!" said Sydney, with much apparent feeling, and with a deep sigh. Annie unconsciously pressed the boy's hand. "I shall lose all my sledging!" said Sydney, with a deeper sigh. Annie dropped his hand. "Everybody loves him!" said Sydney.

"You love the sledging better!" said Annie, sharply. And then the thought came into her mind, whether Claude (for his rank was all forgotten)—whether Claude would be left to die alone in the stranger's land!

what the beautiful Amabel would think, or feel, or say; whether, if she really loved him, and was beloved again, whether she would burst the restraints imposed upon her by an unfeeling world's opinion, rush to him, be his ministering angel, and share his danger—perchance share his early grave. Ah, if she did! happy, happy Amabel! What would Annie Sherwood give to be allowed to approach the sufferer! to minister to him, even in the lowliest offices, though the price paid might be life itself, even like the maiden who died of the plague (with her lover), and whose farewell sigh the fallen spirit stole, and bore to Heaven's gate, thinking it precious enough to win back a forfeited Paradise.

There were quantities of straw laid down in front of the rich man's house, and the carriages rolled noiselessly over it; and around him, in his splendid mansion, was everything that wealth could purchase in the shape of comfort and relief. But a burning fever was raging in his brain, rioting in his blood, and wild, fantastic visions were dancing before him; but there was no gentle hand to smooth his pillow, and bathe his burning forehead. The rich man was

alone. The menials shrunk back; they loved him; he was a kind, generous master, but they could not risk their lives for him—the fever was catching! All this the eye of love saw plainly enough through the thick stone walls, and the closed doors. And she who saw it stood still in her misery, and pressed her hand upon her bursting heart, in a vain attempt to still its throbs, while wild visions, as wild as the sick man's, went through her brain—visions of what she would do, if she dared! How she would forget all consequences—the misery, the ruin it might bring upon her—and go to him, if only she could be sure that he would never know of her presumptuous love!

“I have a great mind to knock at the door and ask how he is!” exclaimed Sydney. “Shall I, Miss Sherwood?”

“Do what your own heart dictates, Sydney,” said Annie, in a broken voice. Sydney rang the bell. At the same moment a respectable-looking young woman of the bourgeoisie class came up. The door was opened by Heinrich. “I want to see milord,” said the woman.

“You can't; he's ill.”

“That is the very reason I must see him.”

"I am sure you can't see him!"

"I hear you want a nurse?" said the woman.

"We do; but we can't get one."

"I am willing to nurse milord."

"Are you not afraid of the fever?"

"Yes; but your master once saved my life; I would risk something to save his."

"Well, then, I'm sure you're welcome."

"Is Lord Claude better?" asked Sydney.

The man shook his head.

"Is he worse?"

He nodded, and Sydney turned away.

How Annie envied the woman on whom the door closed! How jealous she was to think that that woman was to watch hour after hour over Claude, and anticipate his every want! And yet how thankful was she that a kind woman's heart was beating near him, and that that woman's heart was not Amabel Dalrymple's.

Lady Adelaide noted well the feverish flush on Annie's face, the eyes swollen and red with weeping, the nervous start she gave every now and then when any one spoke to her. Lady Adelaide knew Annie's heart was breaking—she knew well why; and just that time she chose for tyrannizing

over and oppressing her as she had never done before.

Mr. Curzon still refused to consent to her dismissal, but now Lady Adelaide had her in her power, and exercising that power with refined cruelty, would of course force the ill-used dependent to withdraw of herself. But the proud lady miscalculated. Annie was absorbed by grief; she was as one that hears not. The insults directed towards her she either saw not, or they had lost all power to wound. She could not think of herself at all—she thought only of Claude. To leave Brussels while his fate was uncertain would have been impossible, had she conceived the thought, but such a thing had never occurred to her. She knew Lady Adelaide hated her, but she forgot it now—forgot her very existence. Annie had but one thought, waking or sleeping. The words “a little better!” gave her life for the day; “not quite so well!” plunged her in despair. At length came a glad sound, “he is out of danger!” Sydney shouted, clapped his hands, and rushing to Annie in his exuberant joy, kissed her cheek for the very first time, and she forgave him that he talked confidently of next winter’s sledging. Mr.

Curzon was really glad. Lady Adelaide was out of humour.

The first day he went out, Lord Claude looked like a ghost; he was walking on the Boulevard, leaning on Heinrich's arm. Annie and Sydney met him; he stopped and shook hands with both.

"You, too, have been ill," said he to Annie, in his low, sweet voice.

"No, my Lord," said Annie, not trusting herself to add more, for she was conscious that he was examining every shade that passed over her face; nay, that he was reading her thoughts. Yes, he was reading them; and as he read, he started, and grew even paler than before. In the little minute in which Annie's cold, trembling hand had rested in his, Claude had found out the secret of her heart. The poor dependent of Lady Adelaide Curzon loved him, the heir of high-sounding titles; and he—he loved her. It was rather an unfortunate discovery to make; but probably people of rank have a way of getting over these little difficulties of which humble mortals are ignorant.

"I must turn, Heinrich," said Lord Claude; "I am faint and tired."

Annie did not dare to say "take care of so

precious a life!" but she thought it, and with her to think was to speak, for her face was the mirror of her soul.

Once more Claude pressed her hand, looked at her with a sorrowful glance, and with a deep sigh turned away.

"Well, St. Preux is gone, I suppose?" said Lady Adelaide, at luncheon, a fortnight later.

"Yes, I saw him off," said Mr. Curzon; "and his destination is Rome."

"Dear me, what will he do there?" said Lady Adelaide; "what an absurd place for a sick man! He will grow melancholy mad, among the *débris* of the past!"

"I remarked to him, that in his place I should prefer Naples," said Mr. Curzon; "but he answered, with a sad smile, 'Rome will suit my present humour. I am not in very brilliant spirits; besides, if I die soon, I should like to be buried in Rome.' By the bye, Sydney, you'll lose your sledging; Lord Claude threatens not to return to Brussels."

"I suppose you know that the Dalrymples are going to Italy?" said Lady Adelaide; "of course, to please Amabel. I think that she and Lord Claude have got up the plan of going there between them. Perhaps she will return a bride!"

CHAPTER XXII.

ANNIE was so thoroughly harassed in mind and worn in health, that she felt inclined to withdraw immediately from her appointment; but when she contemplated such a movement, she started with the remembrance, that by leaving the Curzons she would lose all chance of hearing anything of Claude. She would leave, of course; but she would put off the day till she had heard that his health was entirely re-established. Then, especially if he married Miss Dalrymple, she would remove from scenes and people who would for ever recall to her remembrance one, whom it would then become her duty to forget. How many a destiny has been marred, how many a life wasted, by the words "not yet!"

While Annie was thinking over her future course, a letter from her sister arrived. Ellen was expecting another cherub to increase the happiness of her already happy lot; and she longed so much, pleaded so

earnestly, for Annie's presence, that she resolved to ask for a brief holiday. Probably her request would have been refused, but that Lady Adelaide had persuaded Mr. Curzon to send Sydney to Harrow. Of course her Ladyship's ultimate object was Annie's dismissal; but she knew that, like most weak men, her husband was very obstinate, and so she determined to obtain one thing at a time. Miss Sherwood was to conduct the boy to England by way of Ostend.

The journey was a melancholy one to Annie. Sydney's selfish nature was unchanged, and though so young he was deeply imbued with the worldly spirit; nor had he ever shown her much affection. Still, he was an object of interest to her, from his rare intelligence; and yet more in that he was so intimately associated in her mind with Claude Douglas. She never could think of Claude without remembering the beautiful bright-eyed boy who had always formed a third in their conversation. When Annie parted from Sydney, her tears flowed freely; for she thought not only of leaving him, but of another sadder parting. Sydney, however, smiled exultingly as he shook hands with her, and said—

"I shall find great names on the walls at Harrow, Miss Sherwood! I shall write mine among them, and when I am a great man, people will go to look at it. Good-bye."

"You will write to me, Sydney?"

"Oh, yes, if I can."

"If you can?"

"Why, you see, I shall have no end of work; it will be a great bore to sit down and write, after I have done my——"

"Never mind writing, then," said Annie; "but I hope you will be a good boy, and do your duty."

"Pray don't talk so, Miss Sherwood; it sounds so like brown-holland pinafores and nursery habits! I shall remember who I am, and act as a Curzon should; Harrow shall be one day proud of me. By the way, did you know Lord Claude was a Harrow boy? I shall look for his name the first thing I do;" and nodding to Annie, the proud, ambitious, but, alas! heartless boy turned away, and left the truest friend he would ever meet, without the tribute of one sigh.

"Ah," said Annie, as her lingering eye followed the boy's retreating form, "Made-moiselle Roulard was right when she said to

me, 'Expect neither attachment nor friendship from those to whom you are but a hired dependant. The governess who hopes to form any permanent tie to her pupils, lives in a romantic dream, and wakes to bitter disappointment.' "

The above-quoted Mademoiselle Roulard was a very good, conscientious sort of person, but one who knew the world well; she had spent nearly thirty years in the profession of a governess—ten of them in one family.

The farther Annie went from Brussels, the sadder grew her heart; and yet she was going to Ellen—to dear Ellen, whose love had been the one absorbing passion of her soul, until lately—who was still the dearest object in life to her, save the one distant idol. But how a few hours' journey and absence did away with all reality in the last pages of Annie Sherwood's life! The time which she had spent in the beautiful city was now a dream—half pleasing, half painful, and yet she could not wish it undreamt. Foolish, foolish heart! Annie should have known better than to murmur,

"Give me the pleasure with the pain;
So would I live—so love again!"

Ambitious love has always something ennobling in its very weakness. There can be no shame in the heart's choice, when we have aspired to a star, and forgotten the clods of earth; no shame, unless the fond secret is discovered—and Annie foolishly fancied *her* secret was her own, and that she could keep it even from Ellen!

It was sunset—rich autumnal sunset—when Annie Sherwood arrived in the most beautiful of English cities, the elegant Bath, where art and nature have striven which shall bear away the palm of beauty, and neither art nor nature have triumphed. The city owes half its beauty to the loveliness of surrounding nature, and nature is enhanced by the gem set in her rich bosom.

Annie had gazed around her with delight, as the train shot rapidly through the rich scenery. But now it had reached its destination. Expecting friends crowded the platform, and of course looked in every carriage but the right one for those they awaited; and in the midst of the confusion Annie caught sight of Richard Stancliff's tall, slight figure rushing to the contrary end of the long line of carriages, looking for her, and utterly deaf to her voice. Then,

provokingly enough, Annie's carriage was the very, very last that the guard came to open. But at length she was released—at length Richard's cordial grasp of her hand reassured her that she was not to be imprisoned.

"How is Ellen? Is she here? Did you receive my letter? Did you——"

"She is quite well," answered Richard, hastily; "but I wouldn't let her come. I thought it might be too much for her. Besides, I had borrowed a gig that would only hold two; and—— But where's your luggage? I had forgotten all about it! How you are altered!"

"Yes, I am two years older."

"Indeed you look younger instead of older. The Curzons must have been kind to you! How different you looked when I saw you first! you had then just left the Maberlys. Yes, the Curzons must have been kind!"

"You have no idea of the extent of their kindness!" said Annie, laughing; and Richard thought it all earnest, and talked very pleasantly of the endearing tie that must exist between a governess and her pupils, when the parents make her their

friend ! The conversation diverged of course to Ellen, for the young curate was a lover still, and he had a thousand things to tell (and how proudly he did tell them !) of the precocious talents of his first-born. The prodigy was just two years old, and of course had done and said a great many clever things, and attempted more.

Then Richard added how happy he and Ellen were among their poor neighbours ; what a blessing her gentle visitations had been to many ; how she had nursed a sick child so tenderly and patiently that she had been the means of awakening its ungodly parents from error, and thus had she proved the guardian angel of a seemingly lost family. He told how Ellen had read the Scriptures to the blind old man and the bedridden woman, and went like a pitying spirit from house to house, mildly reproofing the guilty, encouraging the timid, instructing the ignorant, alluring to brighter worlds by the traces of her footsteps, but blushing at the praises even of Richard himself.

There is no saying how long Richard might have gone on dilating on the virtues of his beloved, had not the cottage suddenly

stood before them, and Ellen too, eagerly watching for their arrival.

How joyous was the greeting of the fond sisters! how wildly Annie's heart beat as she clasped Ellen in her arms, for a moment! but only for a moment—even Claude and Rome were forgotten.

"What a paradise this is!" exclaimed Annie, looking round at the sweet spot.

"And yet, perhaps we must leave it!" said Ellen, sighing.

"Leave it!" repeated Annie, uneasily, as the thought darted into her mind that perhaps Richard was about to lose his curacy.

"Has not Richard told you, dear, that he has the promise of a good living in Kent?"

"No, indeed!"

"The truth is, I forgot it, Annie," said Richard; "I was so glad to see you, and had so many things to tell. But I must now repair my omission. Some friend unknown, 'who blushes to call' his goodness 'fame,' has made interest for me with no less a personage than the P——, and I am to have —— Rectory, which is likely to fall in soon. If I consulted only inclination, I should certainly stay where I am, and so would Ellen; but this thing seems pro-

videntially put in our way. We have prayed earnestly for direction, and our way seems clear. You know our income is at present very small. I care little about it, but still I am often grieved to see poor Ellen undertaking, for economy's sake, tasks for which she is unfit. You would scarcely believe it, but she irons all my shirts and neckcloths, though I try to prevent her!"

"But I am so happy doing it, dearest!" said Ellen, looking up with such a light in her innocent eyes that Annie thought, "Oh, how pleasant it would be if Claude Douglas were a poor curate like Richard, and loved me as Richard does Ellen, and I had to work for him as Ellen does for Richard!" And how deep was the sigh that followed the vain thought!

"Is not Annie altered? I mean beautified?" said Richard, snatching off her bonnet.

"She cannot be beautified in my eyes," said Ellen, fondly, kissing her. "But come, you have not seen baby. He can say almost anything. You should hear him repeat Mason's hymn—

'Soon will the evening star, with silver ray.'

He has such a beautiful idea of emphasis,

Annie. "What do you think he said the other day?"

Now, what the young mother's prodigy said the other day, though of course highly interesting to papa, mamma, and auntie, would not be the least so, perhaps, to the reader, so he must be spared the infliction of its recital.

By this time Annie was in the neat sitting-room on the ground floor, arranged very much in the sort of old-fashioned way that the parlour had been at Merton in the good old vicar's time; and there was the vicar's very identical old chair, shabby and rubbed, but not more so than it had been when he had last sat in it. Annie's eyes fixed on it through a mist of tears.

"Good, kind Charles Turner sent it to me, with all the dear old books," said Ellen, "the moment he knew that we had settled down here. Oh, Annie!" she continued, with a broken voice, "how much has happened since our father sat in this chair! How many, many mercies we have received!"

Annie did not answer—she could not. She was reckoning up, not her mercies, but her trials.

"Come to Aunt Annie, my pet," said Ellen, lifting a curtain which divided the

front from the back room, which latter was only used on grand occasions, for it rejoiced in the magnificence of a handsome carpet, a cabinet piano, white muslin curtains, and china vases.

In a shady corner was sitting an old gentleman, with a sweet child on his knee busily employed in endeavours to pull a watch to pieces; but that, of course, was only a proof of an inquiring mind, like that of the young philosopher who ripped open a pair of bellows in search of the wind.

"My dear Doctor! what a joyful surprise!" exclaimed Annie; "but don't kill my nephew!" she added, as the Doctor bounded from his chair, and very nearly let the little boy fall.

"Eh! what! Annie Sherwood! Well, this is a surprise! I thought you'd have been married by this time to one of those whiskered, mustached fellows who——"

"Your surprise is not greater than mine, Doctor," said Annie. "I had not the least idea of finding you here." All this time Annie was busily hugging her little godson, who was equally busy in dislodging a bow of ribbon from her dress, and in pulling down her back hair.

"Why, you've grown quite handsome!" said the Doctor, as the mass of jetty hair fell round Anne's shoulders; "quite handsome, I declare!" The Doctor was not far from speaking the truth, for Annie's face had largely gained that deepest of all beauties—intellectual grace, while the newly-awakened feelings of her heart had spread a roseate hue over her formerly pale cheeks.

It was long before sufficient order had been established in the little circle for its members to understand each other. That object once attained, the first question was, "How long can you stay?"

"Not longer than three weeks," said Annie.

"Not longer than three weeks!" repeated Ellen, with a face of blank disappointment.

"I am afraid I can't stay longer, dear," said Annie, tenderly kissing her sister.

"Can't you write to Lady Adelaide, and beg her to prolong your holiday?"

"No, dear, I must not do that; she is rather particular. My holiday is for a month; in the month must be reckoned the time spent in travelling here, that which returning will take also. Besides, I must stay a few days

in London, where I have a little private business."

"What is it?" asked Ellen, for a secret between Annie and herself seemed an impossibility.

"You must not ask me, dear Ellen," said Annie, smiling, but you will know some day. By the bye, do you know I have serious thoughts of retiring from my professional labours."

"Then you're going to be married!" growled the Doctor.

"No, Doctor, I shall never marry," said Annie, seriously. "You forget how old I am growing. Do you know I am twenty-seven?"

"Oh, I am so glad!" said Ellen.

"What, glad I am growing old?"

"No," said Ellen, laughing; "but glad to think that you have made up your mind to stay at home with me. You must write and tell the Curzons you can't return."

"Impossible!" said Annie, starting. "I could not, dear Ellen; it would not be right in me, to leave them without fair warning. You would not wish me to do what was wrong or dishonourable, Ellen, I am sure!" she added quickly. "Am I

not right, Richard? Must I not give them warning?"

"Yes, I think you should," said Richard. "They ought to have time to provide a successor; but pray mention your intentions directly you return, for indeed Ellen wants you sadly."

"I will," said Annie, sighing.

"Brussels is a pleasant place, I suppose?" said Ellen.

"Oh yes," replied Annie, with animation. "Delightful!"

"Did you know any nice people there?" asked Richard.

"Delightful people!" said the Doctor, mimicking Annie's tone; "as precious a nest of pickpockets as the United Kingdoms ever disgorged. A set of fellows, bankrupts at home in name and fortune, who go across the water to fleece the unfortunate monkeys who trust them, and to finish their style, I suppose. I dare say you have found Lady Adelaide quite an angel?"

"I have seen very little of her."

"And those young scrapegraces? The little dog that used to toss up his head and ask, 'Do you remember who I am?' How did you get on with him?"

"Perfectly well!" said Annie. "We have been on excellent terms. Sydney is a very clever and intelligent boy!"

"And very fond of you, no doubt!" said the Doctor.

"We were inseparable," said Annie.

"By the bye," said Richard, "what has become of that charming French Scotchman, whom you spoke of in your first letters, but have never named since?"

"He! Oh, he is gone I think, I believe to Italy, or somewhere."

"Oh! oh!" grunted the Doctor, as he watched the fluctuating colour in Annie's cheeks.

"I suppose he will return to Brussels, during the time that you are so conscientiously giving Lady Adelaide fair warning?"

"I really don't know; I am not in his counsels," said Annie, very busily playing with her nephew's curls, very busily too hiding her blushing face away behind his shoulders, while pretending to play bo-peep.

"I suppose you speak French quite *con amore*?" added the Doctor.

"I have made some progress in speaking, I hope," said Annie.

"Like French poetry, eh?"

"I do," said Annie, "though I believe I am singular in my taste. I like the modern school of French poetry extremely, beginning with André Chénier."

"When I was young, Miss Sherwood," said the Doctor, "I studied French (on the principle that one fool makes many) because others did the same. I learnt to say *bong jour* and *avez vous fang*, with so vile an accent, that when I talked I was obliged to put my hands over my ears, not to hear my own words! Still I picked up a good deal of the gibberish, and I, too, grew fond of poetry, but of all I read I can only remember this pretty, pathetic verse." Then the old man recited in very good French—

"Le monde de sots est tout rempli,
Et pour ne les jamais voir,
Il faut se cacher chez lui,
Et casser son miroir!"

"Very good advice, Doctor, but my glass is not my own, otherwise I might profit by it!"

"I suppose you've heard plenty of French poetry from the boy's master, eh? Those fellows make love to every girl they meet."

"Yes, I heard a great deal of poetry from Sydney's master, but he did not make love

to me," said Annie, trying to laugh off the subject; "but, Doctor, what has become of the clever vender of iron 'skivers,' as he called them?"

"Don't ask me anything about him," said the Doctor, half vexed, and yet unable to suppress the laugh that would revel in his good-humoured eyes. "The dog turned out ungrateful; ran away, and joined a company of strolling players. I heard of him ranting *Othello* in a barn the other day. I suppose he'll die in the workhouse, in the course of life's 'wicissitoodinous changes!'"

"I suppose he didn't run away with any forks and spoons, Doctor?"

"Who told you he did? I didn't say so!" said the Doctor, nervously fidgetting in his chair, and in his turn eager to divert the conversation into another channel. "Do you remember," he asked quickly, "do you remember a quick, clever little woman, full of furbelows and flounces and talk, that had a place at Sir William S——'s? She had an odd, high-sounding name."

"I know who you mean, Hortensia Maynard; she was very kind-hearted," said Annie.

"To be sure she was, and knew a great

many lords and ladies. Well, she's married!"

"Married?" repeated Annie.

"Yes—is that very wonderful?"

"Rather so; governesses so seldom marry."

"Nevertheless, she is married," said the Doctor.

"Well and happily, I hope?"

"That rather depends on whether she is a contented disposition. But I must tell you all about it, and afterwards you can go on with what you were going to say about the Scotch Frenchman."

"I was not going to say anything about him," said Annie, colouring.

"Nonsense, you know you were; but now for my discourse. About three weeks ago, as I was passing a great church, to which earls and countesses, and young guardsmen and heiresses go to be married, because it's the fashion—I saw by the string of carriages standing at the doors, that a wedding was going on. What must I do, like an old fool, as I always am, but stand still till the bride came out. Of course I expected to see a pretty girl, after waiting long enough to physic and kill a whole ward of patients!

Well, out she came at last—the expected bride! Rather a matronly figure; her face I couldn't see, for she hid her blushes in a Brobdignag 'bucket,' as Mrs. H—— calls those sort of things. But the bridegroom! I am a young man—a Celadon! an Adonis, compared to him! Something between Lismehago and Quixote! I wanted sadly to pull some one's sleeve, and ask if the poor old fellow hadn't come to be buried, and by mistake had got married instead. I had the curiosity to ask afterwards who he was, and found that he was a lieutenant in the army on half-pay, who was marrying his sixth wife, or something of that sort. I rather think the groomsmen were his grandsons! At last I caught a glimpse of the lady's face, and soon recognised the little woman who came to Ellen's wedding, and talked so much of the Marquis of some unpronounceable something. I suppose, poor thing, she was tired of geographies and grammars—perhaps tired of her place and her mistress's airs!"

"Doctor, why will you persist in calling an 'appointment' a place?"

"Because it is one. You know very well the whole pack of you are treated like servants, and to call your employment by a fine name,

is only gilding a bitter pill. I will call things by their names, whoever I offend; I'm determined I will."

"Poor Hortensia!" said Annie.

"Poor!" repeated the Doctor, sententially; "I don't see what pity she wants. Wasn't she married at St. George's? Hadn't she two titles at her wedding? Didn't she wear a beautiful lace gown, and wasn't it all put in the papers? Didn't Gunter provide the breakfast? Poor Hortensia, indeed!"

"But what a dismal fate is hers now!"

"She is vegetating in the country, somewhere in Wales, on the Lieutenant's half-pay, I think," said the Doctor. "But what of that? If she does sometimes say, like Lady Montagu's woman,

'Oh, odious, odious trees!'

I dare say she soon makes up for it, with

'Come what may, I have been blessed.'

Then hasn't she got her wedding gown to look at? And her veil, and her flowers, and kickshaws? Pity her! I should as soon think of pitying the Great Mogul!"

"You are spiteful, Doctor," said Annie. "But do tell me if you have seen Mrs. Harrington."

"Of course I have; but don't you know the news?"

"No, indeed; my friend who lives with the Harringtons, has not written to me for some time. Have you heard from Bertha, Ellen?"

"Not for the last three months," said Ellen.

"Then my news will be news indeed," said the Doctor. "They have experienced some of what our old friend called 'life's wicissitoodinous changes.' Harrington, I am glad to say, is tied by the leg. He has had a paralytic stroke, and lost the use of his limbs. She, like the good angel she always was, forgives and forgets, waits on him tenderly night and day. The fellow seems at last a little sensible of and grateful for her devotion. Your friend, Miss —— what's her name?"

"Somerton."

"Well, she is not like Miss Hortensia Maynard, married, only going to be. But whether it is to a marquis, a dancing-master, or a footman, I don't know; I dare say it's one or the other."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE very day after Annie's arrival at Bath, she found herself an aunt for the second time, and ere her pleasant visit terminated, she once more took on herself the office of godmother, giving to the new comer her own name, at Ellen's entreaty.

Though full of anxiety for Claude Douglas, remembering the uncertain state of his health, Annie could not do other than yield to the pleasant atmosphere of peace and comfort in which she was for awhile living; to see Ellen so deeply blessed, outweighed all her own trials, and when they parted, Annie's spirit was at once softened and elevated.

Happy had it been for Annie Sherwood had that parting never been! but it was only for a short season! Annie would soon return, and for ever. In that assured hope, the sisters forgot to weep, parting with smiles, and utterly unconscious of any of those painful presentiments which often come as shadows cast before trials.

"Only three months, darling!" said Annie, as she kissed her sister.

"They will soon be gone!" responded Ellen.

"Auntie come soon! bring Henry horse!" said the curly-headed boy.

"Very soon, dear pet. One more kiss, Ellen."

"God bless you, Annie!" said Richard. "Read the little book I put in your bag, and Ryle's tracts. Promise me you will."

"And bring me Cæsar Malan's Sermons in French."

"Shall I send them over?"

"Oh no; I can wait till you can come yourself. You will so soon be with us!"

"Good-bye! God bless you, once more!" said Annie, looking back with a bright smile.

"I commend you to your father's God!" said Richard, solemnly; and Annie was gone.

The young curate sighed.

"What is that deep sigh for, dearest?" asked Ellen, passing her arm affectionately through Richard's.

"It was following poor Annie, love."

"Why, dear? I am not the least anxious

about her now. We shall so soon have her with us."

"I hope so!" said Richard.

"You doubt it, then?"

"To tell you the truth, I do. She has some tie to Brussels which will keep her there or make her leave it with a crushed heart."

"Dear me, Richard, what can have suggested such an idea to your mind?"

"The Doctor, the day before he left us; otherwise I never should have thought of such a thing. She is certainly attached to that Lord Claude Douglas, and in all human probability, hopelessly."

"Impossible! Annie would never keep a secret from me. She has always told me her inward thoughts."

"And did you return the confidence, my Ellen?"

"Nearly, I think," said Ellen; "and yet my conscience whispers that I did not tell her all, not quite all, about that shabby curate with the broken-rimmed hat, that used to go by our little window in N—— Street every evening at five o'clock, long, long ago. But I really think you are wrong about Annie. She has too high a spirit to

yield to the weakness of loving one who is indifferent to her."

"But if he should not be indifferent?" said Richard.

"Then you know all will end well. No one would dare to trifle with such a woman as Annie!" replied Ellen, who still thought of her sister with the same sort of proud reliance, with which she had been accustomed to speak of her in olden times as her "elder sister."

"Well, you are right to hope the best, dearest," said Richard, with another sigh; "but now I must go and see my sick."

"Are you going to Widow Bentham's?"

"Yes, dear."

"Then put this piece of flannel in your pocket; I promised her some because she suffers from rheumatism. Try and come round by the mill, returning, that you may leave this little packet of tea at the old soldier's, and here are ten shillings which Annie gave me for the poor. But I have never told you what she has done, Richard. She has put all the money she has received from the Curzons into a savings bank in Henry's name."

"God bless her kind heart!" said Richard,

with emotion ; “ but we must not take it from her, Ellen.”

“ Of course not,” said Ellen ; “ the little she has saved must be a store for herself, the last person in the world she is likely to think of. You don’t know, you never can know, Richard, the generous, self-sacrificing heart of my dear Annie.”

“ She is my Ellen’s sister !” said Richard ; and taking the parcels from Ellen’s hand, he turned into the garden path, and yielded up his mind to the solemn thoughts a Christian pastor should have, when he is just going forth to minister among the aged, the sick, and the dying.

* * * *

On her arrival in London, Annie proceeded to her old lodgings in N—— Street, and immediately busied herself in making up two parcels of MSS., one of which she was going to carry in the morning to her old friend, the editor of the *F*——, and which contained three distinct tales : the other held the MS. of a three-volume novel. The novel was an ambitious attempt, which she never thought of without a beating heart, and which she was about to submit to one of the great publishers whose names strike some-

times more terror into a timid young author, than that of the autocrat into many a serf.

That MS. Annie thought would decide the destiny of her life : if it succeeded—if it were received and acknowledged as the work of genius, it would raise her from obscurity, would wipe off the stain which the name of dependent had fixed upon her, and would annihilate the distance between her station and that of Claude. How often she had heard him say genius was real nobility ! What a joyful thought it was that her writings might perchance, ere long, reach him—charm his imagination, and make his heart beat with sympathy and enthusiasm ! But would he recognise the anonymous author as she who had shared so many of his intellectual dreams ? Would he here and there recognise beautiful images he had himself suggested, eloquent words he had himself spoken, and which she had loved and adopted because they were his ? Would he recognise himself in her hero ? Perchance he would, but still he would never suspect that more than warm friendship and esteem had guided her pen. Perhaps he would recognise her in every page, and if

they never met again; she would at least live in his memory.

In Brussels, Annie knew that she must hear of Claude's health and welfare. There, too, she would learn whether Amabel Dalrymple was the chosen of his heart or not. Those two questions settled, Annie would redeem the promise she had made her sister, settle down with her family in their quiet country home, educate little Henry, and learn to go about doing good as Richard and Ellen did—and if the life which she proposed to lead did not give the serene happiness she had observed in them, at least it would bring with it contentment and resignation!

Such were Annie's thoughts during a long, sleepless night, for sleep was banished by excitement. Rising at a very early hour, something suggested to Annie to take a walk in the E—— Square Gardens, just to glance at the *old* young women whom she had been accustomed to meet there, promenading their charges, and especially to see Julie, whose gentle face and sweet voice had often come back to her memory in visions, since they parted.

It was a cold autumn morning. The

leaves, still laden with summer's dust, were rustling and dancing down in showers on the wings of a sharp east wind. There were still the same prematurely old, care-worn, wrinkled faces—at least some of them, for several families had changed their governesses; but those who replaced the dismissed ones, showed exactly the usual type. A few of the poor women had married men as poor as themselves, by way of bettering their condition; two had become the wives of tradesmen—one of a grocer, the other of a bookseller. Lucky girl! she had gone into his shop humbly to solicit permission to have letters (in answer to an advertisement) left at his shop; and after a daily visit of six weeks, the result was hopeless disappointment. Some of the letters contained remarks which made the poor governess's cheek glow, and her tears drop. The bookseller one day made her an offer; perhaps actuated by pity, perhaps by the pride of securing a wife so superior to his own class. However that might be, the offer was not analysed, but gratefully accepted; for Miss — had been long without employment, and was quite destitute of friends able or willing to assist her. Moreover, she had

caught sight of a handsomely furnished room behind the shop, with luxurious sofas and easy chairs, a cabinet piano, and *recherché* engravings. Something had made her contrast that room with some at the top of the great fashionable houses—with bare floors or threadbare carpets, hard, uneasy chairs, worm-eaten tables, and tinkling pianos; curtainless windows, permitting extensive views of long ranges of mews! There was a contrast, too, between the quietness of the shopkeeper's parlour, and the noise of the spoilt, crying, scratching, tyrannical children. Beyond all, she thought of the lady mother, at whose step the governess would tremble like a detected pickpocket, if the trace of a tear was to be seen on the cheeks of the hopeful progeny!

So the governess had wisely given up the hope of living in "a nobleman or gentleman's family," as she had humbly begged permission to do in her advertisement, and had married the bookseller.

Happy governess! happy bookseller! She had acquired more than she had ever dared to hope for—a home! He had obtained a superior woman for his wife, and could look up and down his street with the satisfied air

of a man who had done something which raised him far above his less ambitious neighbours.

Annie missed Hortensia Maynard and her anecdotes of people of rank—saw nothing of Julie, but met Clarisse. Clarisse was not much altered, only her face had grown sharper, and she laughed louder and oftener. She was harder than she had been; the children who walked by her hand were afraid of her; she was their tyrant. They seldom saw their mother, and had neither the opportunity nor the courage to complain. They had grown like their preceptress, cunning and deceitful; they often succeeded in outwitting her.

“Do you know anything of Julie Angelet?” asked Annie.

“Yes, she has been ver’ imprudent, *ma chère*. She has gone contre mon avis, elle n’a pas voulu m’écouter, and enfin, she has killed herself wid le chagrin and le travail!”

“You cannot mean that she is dead?”

“Vy no, not quite, pas tout à fait, mais elle se meurt.”

“Dreadful!” exclaimed Annie. “But you have seen her—of course you have seen her?”

“Ma foi, non! As good go in de lion’s

cage as go to my-lady—my-lady von dragon !”

“ But who takes care of poor Julie ?”

“ Vy, just no one at all ! Ecoutez, ma chère ; I say, Julie, amusez vous ! She not listen. She vork, vork always to please my-lady. My-lady storm and rage like de sea. She say ‘ Vork, vork, Mademoiselle. Vy you not make de children clever ? Vy you not give dem esprit ?’ Ma foi ! Julie try all she can ; mais les enfants not vork du tout, dey si méchants, si bêtes. Julie von’t beat dem when I say beat ; wouldn’t scold ; try again. Cette pauvre Julie ! Ah, quel cœur ! quel cœur ! mais enfin, elle se meurt !”

“ I will go to her !” exclaimed Annie.

“ My-lady put you hors de la porte ! Ah, if Julie avait voulu m’écouter !”

“ She would have been dishonourable if she had,” said Annie. “ Better die a martyr, than betray one’s trust !”

“ Ver fine dat in a roman ! Ma chère, you will know wiser some day ! Attendez ! attendez ! Un de ces jours vous serez endurcie comme moi ! You know dis poésie :

“ O juste Némésis ! si jamais je puis être
Le plus fort à mon tour, si je puis me voir maître,
Je serai dur, méchant, intraitable, sans foi,
Sanguinaire, cruel comme on l’est avec moi.”

"Cela vous fait horreur?" she added, as the repugnance her words inspired was plainly painted on Annie's face. "Vonce it made me horror too! Yes, vonce I was *crédule*; vnce I had bon cœur! Adieu! amusez vous bien!" and with a laugh that sounded harsh and discordant, the hardened woman turned away, giving a visibly hard tug to the hand of the child by her side, who returned the favour by *accidentally* treading on her corns.

Annie had just turned out of the Gardens, when Clarisse called to her through the railings—

"Vous rappelez-vous cette rousse Anglaise, vot lived wid a Comtesse, and vos too good for to speak us?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Vell, she has had von chute. She live wid a modiste, Oxford Street. Go to de magazin, achetez y quelque-chose; you can riez, laugh her at de nose!"

"Thank you, it would give me no pleasure. I must hasten to poor Julie."

"Inutile, I tell you; elle se meurt. Cela vous attristerait."

"But I may console her!" said Annie.

"Ah, vous avez bon cœur! So had I

voince, but it is done! c'est fini!" said Clarisse, sighing, "but it vont come back!"

* * * *

On a wretched bed, in a more wretched room, lay the dying governess of the rich man's family. Still a girl in years; the trusting, simple innocence of youth still lingered in her soft blue eyes. She was alone—quite alone; and ever and anon put forth her attenuated hand to reach a glass of toast and water which stood on a chair by the bedside, or to get a basin which contained a quantity of blood, for Julie had broken a bloodvessel. After each exertion, she sank back exhausted, and paler than her sheets would have been, had they been clean.

It seemed strange in that home of opulence, that any one should lie there dying alone, unsoothed by the commonplace comforts! Very strange! but it is true, reader—true as the Gospel story of the diseased beggar dying at the gate of Dives, who was clothed in purple and fine linen!

Lady —— was absent; the feelings of the other ladies of the family were so refined that they could not witness suffering. So, when Mademoiselle was so *maladroite* as to be taken dangerously ill, they had ordered

the carriage and left the house, leaving the sick governess in the cook's charge. But the cook—poor, fat, unwieldy soul—though perhaps she meant to do what she could, for cooks are usually soft-hearted, had quite enough occupation to roast and boil, and make pastry for the ladies and gentlemen in the servants' hall; so she put all that "madamosel" could possibly want on a chair near her. The doctor said she mustn't talk, and what good could there be in sitting and watching her? None in the world.

At last some one, perhaps the doctor, had suggested greater care, so a person was sent for to sit by the sick girl. The person in question was a German soubrette, or something of that sort. She just waited till poor Julie dozed off; then having found the sick-room very dull, she was going in quest of company, when a bright idea struck her. She would like to peep into the drawers! No sooner thought than acted upon; and when the dying girl opened her eyes, her nurse was deep in the perusal of a packet of letters. The natural exclamation of grief and indignation in the sufferer startled her a little. "You know the doctor forbid your talking," she exclaimed, after a

moment, with all the coolness of effrontery ;
“if you wont mind what he tells you—if
you will break his rules, you must expect to
suffer. Ah, more spitting of blood ! that’s
just what I expected !”

Again exhausted nature found a temporary
repose, and Julie’s pale cheek, here and
there stained with crimson, sunk on the
pillow. The watcher having satisfied her
curiosity, went away to chat with the butler.
Just then Annie entered. “Poor, poor
Julie !” was all she uttered, as she sunk on
her knees beside the desolate bed, and took
the white thin hand that hung down so help-
lessly ; but Julie heard her not. She was
in a blessed dream, kneeling beside her
mother in the Evangelical congregation of
her native valley, and presently her thin
lips quivered, opened, and she began to
chant, in a feeble, broken voice—

“ L’Eternel lui-même
Paîtra ses troupeaux ;
La tendresse extrême
Sera leur repos.

* * * *

“ Aux célestes rives,
L’agueau nous paîtra ;
La fleuve d’eau vive
Nous abreuvera !”

And then Julie smiled a sweet, sad smile, and murmured, "Oui, ma mère, je viens—je viens ! Attends-moi !" Then the smile faded away, and her vision changed, for she added—"Seule ! bien seule ! Ah ! Madame la Comtesse, j'ai fait mon possible ! Ne me renvoyez pas ! Charlotte, récitez votre verbe. Emilie, faites votre devoir. Dites, Madame la Comtesse, êtes-vous contente de moi ? Je ne demande pas à aller au salon ! Oh, non ! non ! je ne me suis jamais plainte de vous, jamais ! Demain—oui, demain, j'aurai deux cents francs, ma mère chérie ; je te les enverrai tous. Ah, je ferai tout ce qui dépend de moi pour garder ma place ! Mais j'ai si mal à la poitrine ! si mal ! si mal ! And poor Julie woke herself with heartrending sobs.

Surprise, joy to see a friend's sympathising face bending over her, was too much for the feeble frame of Julie. She could not speak, but stretched out her arms, and made a helpless effort to throw them round Annie.

"Don't talk, dear Julie !" whispered Annie, while she tenderly supported her, and the girl's feeble head rested on her shoulder. "Be comforted, you shall not be left to the mercy of careless strangers. I will take

care of you, and will bring a kind doctor to do you good. Poor, poor Julie !”

Julie tried to smile; but a convulsive struggle quivered on her lips. She looked up wistfully in Annie’s face, then at a little Geneva watch that lay beside her on the bed, and murmuring “Oh, ma mère!” died — died while the merry bells were ringing for a bridal.

A deep awe settled upon Annie Sherwood ; she did not stir nor utter a word, scarcely did she dare to breathe, and the fair clay still rested in her arms, when, an hour later, some one knocked softly, very softly at the door. Still Annie did not move, she was spell-bound. The door opened ; a person entered with slow, noiseless steps, as if death were already known to be there.

“ Is she better ?” asked a voice, low and tremulous with emotion. Annie started, and looked up at the doctor as she supposed, for a gentleman in black stood before her. “ Better ! yes she is better,” replied Annie ; “ the rich man’s bond-slave is free ! She is gone, sir,” she continued solemnly, and raising her hand appealingly to heaven ; “ she is gone to bear evidence against him at the bar of One who judges the oppressor !”

"Gone! dead! Gracious Heaven, I come too late!" exclaimed the young man. "Poor, poor Julie! I came to save her—to——"

"She has been long past the reach of art or skill!" said Annie.

"Julie! Julie! my sweet, innocent Julie!" repeated the young man, sinking on his knees beside the bed, and reverently clasping the marble hand in his. "Oh, to recal the past! to bring thee back for one short hour! Oh, Julie! Julie!"

"Did you try everything? Are you sure you tried everything?" said Annie.

"Nothing! nothing!" he replied.

"How! are you not the doctor?"

"I am Lady ——'s son."

"You are! Oh, how then could you let your mother's dependent die thus! alone, neglected!—as in your noble house the very hound should not be left to die!"

"I knew nothing, absolutely nothing of her illness till to-day," exclaimed Mr. Denham, with a burst of grief, "or I should have been here!"

"I did not know she had one friend in this house!" said Annie, sadly.

"No, she had no friend! I loved her—but——"

"But you wanted manly courage to defend her! You have let her die! let her be slowly murdered by labour and cruelty!" said Annie, with indignant energy, which even the presence of the holy dead could not suppress.

"I deserve your reproaches, and more!" said Mr. Denham.

"You do! But for a mother's broken heart, I should laud the mercy that has liberated her from her hard fate."

"You are her friend," said the young man, quickly; "take possession of her letters and papers, or they will all be——"

"Read—I know it!" said Annie.

"And you will stay by her till——"

"No, sir; I will not stay, but shall have this poor empty casket removed. It held a bright jewel once—but now—— Oh, if you had heard her last words; the mournful tenderness, the helpless yearning with which she called upon her far-off mother's name; but she was in the house of the stranger, and she lived and died alone!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I AM assuredly very much surprised that you should have taken the liberty of remaining three days beyond your allotted time, Miss Sherwood !" said Lady Adelaide. "A person in your position ought to be well aware that the nature of her duties will not permit such a lengthened absence. Of course you will find the children very much fallen back in their studies. I must really talk to Mr. Curzon about it. We must have people upon whom we can depend, in our employment."

"I am extremely sorry to have seemed neglectful of my duties," said Annie ; "but the delay was quite unavoidable. I only remained in London to follow a poor friend to her grave, who had none other to perform the last sad duties for her."

"That is no excuse whatever. You told me you had only one relation in the world (which was one reason of my engaging you, supposing that your interest would lie with

your pupils, not out of the house). I presume that your sister is not dead, as you are not in deep mourning, and no other death could have excused your conduct."

Annie made no reply; but she thought, "It will not be for long. The moment I hear any news of Claude, I will give warning!"

Annie had had the remains of the hapless Julie removed to her own lodgings, and had followed her to her lonely resting-place. Randolph Denham, too, had stood by, evincing the deepest grief when earth was given to earth. Perhaps his grief was not unmingled with remorse, for he had really loved Julie, only not well enough to conquer his family pride—only not well enough to protect her from the insults of his family. It was well and wisely done when the consolers came, and bore the weary to her rest!

Annie had written to the poor mother, conveying as gently as she could the heart-breaking news of her bereavement—sending one of three fair locks she had severed from Julie's head; one she had given to Randolph Denham, and as he gazed on it, some of the hard dross of his aristocratic nature was transmuted.

Julie's little wardrobe, and few letters and

books, had also been sent to her mother by Annie's kind care; and all the necessary arrangements had so taken up her time, that she had exceeded her leave of absence almost unconsciously.

Being obliged to leave London without seeing Mrs. Harrington or Bertha, Annie wrote to both, and heard in return a confirmation of Dr. Sinclair's information. Mrs. Harrington's letter breathed a spirit of thankfulness to that God who had brought—in her case—so much good out of evil. Of her husband she spoke with the utmost tenderness and devotion. Bertha's letter made Annie smile, even in the midst of sadness. She wrote to confess that her affianced lover was none other than Annie's old fervent admirer, Charles Turner. Bertha had met him again and again in her many happy holidays, which were all spent at Merton with her mother; and somehow—she did not quite know how it came about—they were engaged. Bertha had written very hesitatingly—she felt so sure that Annie would ridicule her choice. She had good reasons for supposing that her friend undervalued Charles Turner's excellent qualities of head and heart.

Bertha was mistaken. Annie did full justice to her rustic friend now, and warmly applauded Bertha's choice.

The young couple were to be married immediately, and Bertha's mother was to live with them ever after.

Day after day went by, and poor Annie heard nothing of Claude. He seemed forgotten; his name was never pronounced. Sydney being gone, the other boys appeared to have lost all interest in Sydney's friend. Everything went on much as usual; Lady Adelaide exerted a petty tyranny; Mr. Curzon was kind in his way, only it was such a tiresome way; the children were tolerably good, provided they were amused, and all their selfish whims considered.

Miss Dobson preserved towards Annie Sherwood something which she meant to be a dignified reserve; but it was as little like dignity as a red woollen nightcap is like a tiara of gems.

Annie missed Sydney; he was wanting to her daily and hourly; and he never wrote to make up for his absence, or to show that he remembered her kindness with gratitude.

Time hung heavily on the governess's

hands. She turned to writing with increased avidity. In consequence of her sad occupation with regard to poor Julie's affairs, Annie had been obliged to leave her own business in London undone. At the last minute she had sent her parcels of MSS. to the good Doctor, telling him what had happened, begging him to act for her, and to keep her secret. She knew he would do all that he was asked, and more, and she could afford to await the result.

But, whatever occupied Annie's mind, it always returned to Claude. Was he living? Certainly, or some notice would have appeared in the papers, which she constantly searched for the purpose of ascertaining if his name were mentioned.

Two months after Annie's return to Brussels, there came a letter from the Doctor, kind and cordial as usual, but of course containing some teasing. His news was good, however; the old patron had offered sixty-five guineas for some small MSS., and, best of all, the novel, the long-cherished ambitious novel was sold, and that advantageously. Its fate with the public had yet to be decided, and Annie resolved to preserve her secret, even from Ellen, till she knew

whether disappointment or triumph awaited her. She wrote to her sister, telling of her minor success, and sending her its proceeds to be employed for the coming move from Bath to Kent. The price of the great MS. privately went to swell little Henry's fortune in the savings bank.

On the whole, our heroine felt considerably elated; and had she been sure about Claude, quite sure that he was well and happy, she would have been so too, especially if the Dalrymples were not in Italy! They had certainly left Brussels, or Annie must have met them in the Park or on the Boulevard.

Lately, the beautiful Lady Adelaide had rather fallen off in her looks; she had ceased to have absolute command over herself. She had given way to spleen and ill-humour; and spleen and ill-humour will line the fairest forehead, and make the brightest cheek pallid. The timid literary lady was as intimate as ever with Lady Adelaide, and much more intimate than ever with Mr. Curzon; indeed, her attentions to him assumed quite a tender aspect; and Mr. Curzon began to think the literary lady not quite so old, not quite so ugly, as he had at first thought her. Mr. Curzon never went be-

yond allowing himself to be admired; and he certainly was a strikingly handsome man, and would have been more so, if he had had the least change of expression—indeed, if he could occasionally have forgotten “who and what he was!” But with all his pride of place, Mr. Curzon had *bon cœur*, only a very, very little mind.

Annie was now totally thrown on her own resources for companionship. The result of her solitude was an improvement in her reflective powers, but a prostration of her spirits. Frequent letters from Richard and Ellen (who often wrote jointly) came to remind Annie of her promised return. They took it for granted that her intended warning had been given and accepted: this misapprehension both pained and embarrassed our heroine. Truly she yearned for her sister's society, and the renewed endearments of a real home; but how could she tear herself from the spot where she had known and loved Claude Douglas, while yet uncertain of his fate? On the other hand, she felt grieved and ashamed to put off her return to Ellen from time to time without having any sufficient excuse to offer for disappointing her wishes.

While her mind was most uneasily vacillating between contradictory wishes and resolutions, an incident occurred which immediately decided her movements. She wrote to her sister, "Don't be grieved with me, dearest Ellen, for disappointing your wishes—or rather for delaying their accomplishment—but I have agreed to remain with the Curzons till Walter goes to Harrow. Perhaps it will be a year before he is considered fit; but that will soon slip away, and I shall be of more use to you in a twelvemonth's time than I should be now. Remember, dearest, that none of my plans are renounced—they are only deferred. I fully intend to monopolise Harry's education."

Annie's decision hinged on a trifle,—a seeming accident. She had a very untidy work-basket (not a very uncommon thing, unhappily, with a literary lady), and she had been so engaged with other matters, that the untidy basket remained untouched, and probably unnoticed, in her bed-room, from the time of her leaving for her holiday. There it might have remained, had she not heard Miss Dobson enlarging to Lady Adelaide on the governess's untidiness, and

"How should you know?" said Lady Adelaide sharply.

"How should you know?" said Lady Adelaide sharply.

"—I went into my room yesterday," said Emma, who was sitting beside her, "and she should have been there."

"And you were there?" said Lady Adelaide, who looked at her with a smile.

"I went to— to look for an extraordinary thing," said Emma.

"You went to look for an extraordinary thing?" said Emma, who was sitting beside her.

"Dear me, how your Ladyship finds out everything!" said Emma.

"Yes, you know it is useless to try and deceive me," said Lady Adelaide, smiling— "And pray what did you find there to satisfy you?"

"A letter," said Emma, who was trembling.

"A letter! Well, go on."

"At the bottom of the basket—"

"Oh! then you dived to the bottom?"

"Your Ladyship knows everything! At

the bottom of the basket I saw a letter, sealed with arms surmounted by a coronet !”

If Lady Adelaide or Dobson had been acute, they would have noticed that some one who had been walking up-stairs with a slow, languid step (hearing, inevitably, every word of the conversation, yet little caring whether she heard it or not), suddenly rushed onward like an arrow from a bow, heedless of the conclusion the conversation might have.

“She can’t have seen it, for the seal is unbroken ; some one has put it in there, while she was in England.”

“Bring it to me when she is out to-morrow.”

“Yes, my Lady.”

“Who is it from, Dobson ?”

“Really, I can’t tell, my Lady.”

“Nonsense, you know well enough !”

“But, your Ladyship !”

“I insist upon knowing.”

“Well, then, I did just hold it up to the light, and——”

“What then ?”

“Well, then, your Ladyship,—but I know you’ll be very angry with me !”

“Angry with a thing like you ! Speak !”

"Well, then, my Lady, I think—I believe—I'm afraid (oh, how wicked she is!)—I'm afraid it's from Mr. Curzon!"

"Is that all, you silly fool? If you are quite sure that the letter comes from Mr. Curzon, you need not bring it to me; I never meddle in his affairs. But do you know his writing?"

"No—yes—that is to say, my Lady—"

"That is to say, you have been prying into Mr. Curzon's business, as you no doubt would into mine, if you dared! But you know me, Dobson—you know me; beware how you go too far!" and Lady Adelaide gave her creature a look which made her shrink in her poor, wrinkled skin, as if she had heard the hiss of a rattlesnake.

Despite her many little gains, Dobson began to hate her bondage, and if she could have sold herself for a higher price, she would have had no compunction in betraying the confidence of her patroness.

But to return to Annie, as she sat in her lonely room, but lonely now no more. She held in her trembling hands the precious letter, still unopened, while her heart beat with tumultuous joy in recognising Claude's writing, and in reading the post-mark of the

Eternal City—Roma! Roma! the goal of all her thoughts, hopes, fears, and wishes.

“I scarcely know how, my dear Miss Sherwood, to excuse to you or to myself, the liberty which I take in writing to you. But why should I talk to you of excuses? You are not of the world, and were you, I should need no apology, for then I should have had no temptation to transgress those conventionalities which would have formed your law. But why do I thus intrude on you? I scarcely know myself, unless it be that, like ‘the man of many friends,’ I have none, and turn instinctively to the only heart which, since my mother’s death, seems to have understood mine.

“How often I have wished for your companionship in my solitary rambles about Rome!—Rome, whose very name is poetry!—Rome, which in all my wanderings I had never before seen; for although ‘I loved her from my boyhood,’ I resolved to reserve the sight of the world’s wonder for a period of life when my feelings would be more accordant with the scenes I should explore. With what holy reverence I tread upon the dust of ages! the dust of Earth’s masters!

The learned and the virtuosi would make

bitter mockery of me for walking about Rome, as in a dream, with no more erudite tome for a guide-book than the sentimental production of an impassioned woman ! But I could well endure a few sarcasms, while I can secure the company of the matchless 'Corinne ;' encore plus heureux si je pouvais me défaire de ce méprisable Oswald ! Oswald, who was too contemptibly weak to resolve on making his own happiness, in defiance of a world which had nothing to offer him in exchange for the felicity he sacrificed upon her tinselled altars. You, at least, will applaud my choice of a cicerone, and I shall never converse with 'Corinne' without remembering you.

" I remember some years since (though with a lesser interest), 'Consuelo' and I wandered together through Venice. Have you ever read 'Consuelo ?' If not, do read it ; as a sentimental fiction it is only inferior to 'Corinne,' and is full of poetry and fine thoughts.

" But to return to Rome. I shall make no fruitless efforts to describe to you my thoughts on her, but

' I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me !'

The one which always rises to the surface is Filicaja's tender lamentation—

‘Deh fossi tu men bell’ o almen piu forte !’

You know the exquisite opening of the poem,

‘Italia!—oh, Italia!’ &c.

“Get *Leopardi*, if you have not a copy, but only read the first piece ; it begins thus :—

‘O Patria mia, vedo le mura e gli archi,
E le colonne e i simulacri e l’erme
Torri degli avi nostri,
Ma la gloria non vedo !’

The whole piece is exquisite.

“No modern Italian poet has equalled *Leopardi*’s majestic fragments.

“Ah, if you were here ! But I dare not, in imagination, conjure up a possible vision which waking reality must so soon dispel ! I talked of not returning to Brussels ; but I must, I certainly shall, if you are there, if only to talk over Rome with you.

“I was entreated last night ‘d’assister à un bal.’ A ball in Rome ! dancing in Rome ! The suggestion is painful. Only imagine dancing over the ashes of Cæsar ! I marvel that they should propose it, even to a Frenchman ! They forget that I am also Scotch, and, besides, they evidently entertain the common, vulgar notion, that a French-

man is born to dance 'as the sparks fly upwards.'

"I know nothing more harassing to the spirit, than the tone of English society here. A party went to the opening of a tomb the other day, and—and carried their luncheon with them! Imagine sandwiches and wine-glasses on the tomb of a Cecilia Metella, perhaps! Lady —— is here, with a daughter who is a beauty and an heiress—she is much the fashion, and seen everywhere. Sometimes I have thought her capable of rather a higher destiny than dancing with insipid fops all the evening, and evening after evening; but on further acquaintance, I fear she is a trifler.

"I see very little of the gay world; indeed—

'My days among the dead are passed!'

I believe people think me morbid or affected. My best acquaintance, *i.e.*, at once the most profitable and agreeable, is a young American sculptor, whose own head is a model of antique beauty, and whose genius is as plainly delineated in his pure, intellectual countenance, as in his works. When they come to be known, they must give him a place beside his gifted countryman,

Hiram Powers, who, from the humble employment of a journeyman watchmaker, has risen to be a poet in enduring marble. What a destiny ! I like the idea of a young genius in a young country ! How bright and fresh must its emanations be !—something like the first young stars that hung over a newly-created world ! But to come back to my sculptor friend, whom I admire enthusiastically. I cannot refrain from giving you a description of him. Picture to yourself a tall, slight, elegant figure, with just enough fragility to occasion a slight stoop, which yet takes nothing from his grace. A Grecian profile, quite pure ; large, dark, very dark eyes, full of tenderness and thought rather than of fire ; hair, black, soft, luxuriant, long and curling, beautiful enough for a woman's head ; and withal, a demeanour so quiet and subdued, that it might almost be called sad. He speaks little, till the chord is touched which awakes his soul's poetry—then the beautiful face wakes up, and speaks eloquent words before the voice is heard. I should like you to see Waldo —— ; and yet no ; probably no woman would see and not love him. No, I would rather that you should never see him.

“We talk of visiting Athens together—I know every inch of the ground, but never tire of Greece. We shall then go I know not where, but at least to some part of the ‘Morgen-lande.’ Did the beauty of that expression ever strike you? I am sure it must have! Before travelling eastward, I shall make a rapid descent on Brussels for a few days.

* * * *

“After an interval of two months, I have taken up the foregoing sheet of random, unconnected sentences, and wondered at my own temerity in writing them. To you, Annie Sherwood, they say too much, or too little! How shall I explain myself, to you in whom I have found not only that rare thing, an intellectual companion, but also—forgive the boldness of the remark—a tender friend!

“I dreamt of returning to Brussels, and seeing you again; but it must not be, or—I should never have the resolution to——

“Brilliant as a vain world may estimate my lot, there is a deep shadow on its sunshine, and that shadow must not fall on those I love. A skeleton sits down at my banquets, which wants even the veil and the crown

of roses with which the Epicurean voluptuary was wont to mask the memento of mortality. I must gaze on the appalling relic naked, and I must gaze on it alone !

“But I will not, I must not enlarge on my sorrows, real or imaginary. You—you have enough of your own, more than enough, in being placed in a position equally unsuited to the elevation of your mind and the tenderness of your heart. I cannot help hoping that you may soon exchange the ungenial atmosphere in which you live, for your sister’s pleasant home, which you have so often described to me. I ought to say, perhaps, that you may soon exchange it for a home of your own ; but no, I cannot—I am not generous enough to think of you as making the happiness of another man.

“Adieu, malgré moi, je reviens à ma langue maternelle, lorsque c’est mon cœur qui parle ! Adieu, chère Miss Sherwood. Prenez bon courage au milieu des chagrins qui traversent votre vie. Souvenez-vous que la Providence finit toujours, par jeter un peu de lumière et de paix dans les âmes qui ont confiance en elle.

—“ Priez Dieu pour moi quand mon souvenir vous reviendra, je pars pour la Grèce avec

un lourd fardeau, et je sens saigner tous les coups que le sort m'a déjà portés. Plus j'avance, plus je m'isole, cette pensée est affreuse pour moi. Adieu, encore une fois adieu ! Croyez que j'emporte un amer regret, c'est celui de n'avoir pas pu vous consoler, comme j'aurais voulu le faire, bien souvent ; je ne vous oublierai jamais ! non jamais !

“ Je vous embrasse du fond de mon âme !

“ CLAUDE.”

Adieu, tel est le mot de cette étrange vie,
Où notre main flétrit la fleur qu'elle a ravie,
Avant qu'à l'œil épris, n'ait brillé sa couleur ;
Où par instant l'espoir en un sein se repose,
Ainsi qu'un vain rayon, et toujours y dépose
Le germe aigri de la douleur.

Je le sais, non jamais le destin ne répare,
L'outrage fait aux cœurs, qu'ici-bas il sépare,
De mon front éprouvé, ce beau rêve est exclu,
J'ai compris qu'entre mille, une âme était fidèle,
Et qu' en son nid la joyeuse hirondelle,
Avec l'été ne revient pas.

Adieu ! Quand on a dit cette amère parole,
Il n'en faut plus chercher une autre qui console,
Il faut mêler ses pleurs et —

END OF VOL. II.

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